

Sir Gawain *and the* Green Knight



A CLOSE VERSE TRANSLATION BY

Larry D. Benson

WITH A FOREWORD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXT EDITED BY

DANIEL DONOGHUE

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

SIR GAWAIN

AND THE

GREEN KNIGHT

Medieval European Studies XIII

Patrick W. Conner, Series Editor

Other Titles in the Series:

Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas

Thomas N. Hall, Editor, with assistance from Thomas D. Hill and Charles D. Wright

Héliand: Text and Commentary

Edited by James E. Cathey

Naked Before God: Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England

Edited by Benjamin C. Withers and Jonathan Wilcox

Theorizing Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture

Edited by Catherine E. Karkov and Fred Orton

Old English Literature in its Manuscript Context

Edited by Joyce Tally Lionarons

Ancient Privileges: Beowulf, Law, and the Making of Germanic Antiquity

Stefan Jurasinski

Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede

Edited by Scott DeGregorio

The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies

Presented to Donald G. Scragg on his Seventieth Birthday

Edited by Jonathan Wilcox and Hugh Magennis

Cædmon's Hymn and Material Culture in the World of Bede

Edited by Allen J. Frantzen and John Hines

The Cross and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England

Edited by Karen Jolly, Catherine E. Karkov, and Sarah Larratt Keefer

Cross and Cruciform in the Anglo-Saxon World:

Studies to Honor the Memory of Timothy Reuter

Edited by Sarah Larratt Keefer, Karen Louise Jolly, and Catherine E. Karkov

Perspectives on the Old Saxon Heliand:

Introductory and Critical Essays, with an Edition of the Leipzig Fragment

Edited by Valentine A. Pakis

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

A CLOSE VERSE TRANSLATION

TRANSLATED BY

Larry D. Benson

WITH A FOREWORD AND

MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXT EDITED BY

DANIEL DONOGHUE



MORGANTOWN 2012

West Virginia University Press, Morgantown 26506

Copyright 2012 by West Virginia University Press

All rights reserved

First edition published 2012 by West Virginia University Press

Printed in the United States of America

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Paper: 978-1-933202-89-1 / EPUB: 978-1-935978-10-7

PDF: 978-1-935978-63-3

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Benson, Larry D. 19——

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight : a close verse translation / by Larry D. Benson. --
1st ed.

p. cm. -- (Medieval European studies ; v. 13)

Includes both the modern English and the Middle English text.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-1-933202-89-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-1-935978-10-7 (electronic)

1. Gawain (Legendary character)--Romances. 2. Knights and knighthood--Poetry.
3. Arthurian romances. I. Benson, Larry Dean, 1929- II. Title.

PR2065.G3A332 2012

821'.1--dc23

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011018426

Book Design by Than Saffel

Background image: Willow Bough wallpaper designed by William Morris, repurposed as fabric design c. 1895. Used under a Creative Commons license granted by PKM, the original scanner. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Morris_Willow_Bough_1887.jpg . Front cover image: Wood-cut of a Knight. (From Caxton's *Game of the Chess*) Source: Knight, Charles: "Old England: A Pictorial Museum" (1845).

Contents

Acknowledgments	vi
Foreword	vii
Select Bibliography	xxvi
A Note on the Middle English Original Text	xxviii
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight	1

Acknowledgments

Both of us owe thanks to Pat Conner for initiating the process by which West Virginia University Press undertook this publication. Daniel thanks Larry for the invitation to collaborate and for good conversations over Mexican food. Larry owes thanks to many, such as Jim Smith, who helped often without knowing it. But his greatest help came from Stephen A. Barney, who generously took the time to read and correct the whole manuscript. So too did Theodore M. Andersson, whose careful reading saved Larry from many blunders. Finally, the translation is dedicated to Gavin Benson, whose very name bears witness to his long and happy association with the best of knights.

Foreword

By Daniel Donoghue

When Larry Benson first described his project to translate *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, I was skeptical. It wasn't just the thought that other translations have appeared in recent years. "Why another?" is easily answered if the translation is good, and Benson has every credential a translator needs, because his ties to the poem are deep and go back at least to his now-classic 1965 book, *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. No, my skepticism had to do with the kind of translation he proposed, which keeps as much of the original language as possible but in modernized spelling, and which substitutes modern equivalents for words in the poem's diction that have fallen out of use. Its adherence to the literal is what makes it a "Close Translation." To me it seemed like a high-risk formula: neither fish nor fowl, a gal-limaufry of modern and medieval, a mechanical process applied to a living work of art. Was it a real translation or a kind of aggressive normalization? On a more practical level, does modern English have suitable equivalents for the *Gawain*-poet's famously rich word-hoard of synonyms?

Then I read it. My skepticism yielded to acceptance, acceptance to admiration, admiration to reading pleasure. This translation really *is* the closest thing to reading the Middle English poem because of its consistency in preserving the essential features of the original: its rhythm, its alliteration, and its unique syntax. Recent translations by Borroff, Tolkien, Merwin, and Armitage craft an alliterative verse line as an aesthetic echo and homage to the original; O'Donoghue's does away with alliteration but keeps the pattern of four prominent stresses per line. No matter what style of verse

line is chosen, each successful translation like these stands on its own two feet and invites the reader to enter into a temporary conspiracy to forget about the original. This amnesia is both a product of the poet's craft and a sign of success. Benson's literal translation, however, replaces this illusion with a sense of proximity. It never lets readers forget that they are reading a translation, because the original never seems out of earshot. While the meaning of each line is comprehensible even to students coming to the poem for the first time, the translation retains the essence of the poem's alliterative lines (which in this edition are printed *en face*). Illustrative passages could be chosen almost at random, but the following description of Gawain and his guide making their predawn trip to the Green Chapel displays the main features:

They bound by banks where boughs are bare,
They climb by cliffs where clings the cold.
The heaven was up high but ugly there-under;
Mist drizzled on the moor melted on the mountains;
Each hill had a hat, a huge mantle of mist;
Brooks boiled and broke by banks about,
Brightly shattering on shores where they shot down.
Well wild was the way where they went by wood.
(2077–84)

It is all here: the visual images, the narrative control, the compact phrasing, the rhythm and alliteration. A poetic rendering today could not venture phrasings such as "where clings the cold" and "Well wild was the way," but they rise naturally from the poem's wellspring. To see this translation's fidelity, compare the first two lines above with the original:

þay boȝen bi bonkkeȝ þer boȝeȝ ar bare,
þay clomben bi clyffeȝ þer clengeȝ þe colde.

Benson's translation also preserves what is called the historical present (illustrated here with "clings" as opposed to "clung") as well as older word forms like "thou keepest"; it keeps original features of syntax such as multiple negatives and the inversion of word order. Poetic synonyms such as *freke*, *gome*, *hapel*, *segge* which have fallen out of the language are replaced with a modern word alliterating on the same sound: *fighter*, *gallant*, *horseman*, *stalwart*. The effect of preserving syntax and diction can be sensed in a line like "The gallant upon Gringolet galloped them under" (748), where "gallant" is an unintrusive substitute and "them under" preserves the original's inversion of word order. Examining isolated instances does not do justice to the overall effect of reading passage after passage, where Benson's literal translation shows its great advantage in conveying the medieval poem's energy and excitement. It can be read for pure enjoyment, but it also appeals to those who want more direct engagement with the medieval text.

The Poem and the Poet

One of the masterpieces of Middle English, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* stands comparison with the greatest literature from any language and period. This critical reception, however, is fairly recent, because the poem did not come to the attention of a broad audience until the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was first edited and published. Unlike Chaucer, for example, whose poetic gifts were recognized in his lifetime and whose works survive in multiple copies, the *Gawain*-poet apparently never enjoyed

wide circulation, and all that survives is contained in an unassuming manuscript, roughly the size of the book you are holding, now housed in the British Library with the shelf mark Cotton Nero A.x, Art 3. Besides the text translated here, the manuscript contains another three narrative poems almost certainly by the same author, which are known by their modern names *Pearl*, *Cleanness*, and *Patience*. The four poems' relatively obscure dialect, not surprisingly, has conditioned their modern reception. Most readers today encounter them only in translation, while Chaucer's London dialect, by contrast, is still relatively accessible to anyone familiar with Modern English.

Nothing is known of the *Gawain*-poet except what can be gleaned from his body of writings. They show he was a person of considerable learning. (I use "he" for convenience; among the things unknown is the poet's gender.) Parts of the plot of *Sir Gawain* reveal a deep acquaintance with French romances; his other poems show familiarity with Latin theology and biblical exegesis. The literary sources of all four poems, taken together, suggest that he had training appropriate for the clergy, but we cannot be sure whether he took orders or, if he did, whether he remained in religious life. The poet's imaginative world is vast and varied: *Sir Gawain* is a secular romance rather than a religious work; *Pearl* presents itself as a dream vision of a father who loses his daughter, yet this secular frame is used for a didactic message based on orthodox theology. *Patience* and *Cleanness*, by contrast, are more religious in a conventional sense. Even if the poet were ordained in higher orders, he knew enough about the outside world to write vivid scenes of boar hunting and sexual seduction. In thinking about this mixture of the sacred and profane from our historical remove, we need to remember that the secular and religious spheres

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is but one of a number of substantial poems assigned to the fourteenth-century “Alliterative Revival.” Most prevalent in the north and west of England, the Revival saw a flourishing of poems that use alliteration as an essential formal device. For centuries the alliterative line had been a traditional English verse form—as the quotation above puts it, “In this land as has been long”—as opposed to the rhyming iambic verse associated with French and other continental literatures. The alliterative line’s persistence within an English oral tradition, though virtually certain, is untraceable for the obvious reason that it was spoken, not written. It descends from Old English alliterative verse in ways that are not entirely clear because the literary record is fragmentary. We do know, however, that already by the end of the Old English period the strict metrical conventions were changing. And later, after more than two centuries when poems like *SGGK* re-emerge “with true letters interlocked,” the alliterative line has expanded and gained rhythmic flexibility. Because Benson’s translation follows the original poem so closely, it can be used to illustrate *Sir Gawain*’s verse form.

The *Gawain*-poet’s basic line unfolds into two parts, divided by a pause called a caesura. A typical half-line has two syllables that receive a prominent stress (or accent), and the number of unstressed syllables between them can vary, so that while the rhythm will always change from one line to the next, the pattern of four stressed syllables gives shape to each line. Usually the first three of the stressed syllables will alliterate but not the final one. The following lines, coming shortly after the passage of the ride to the Green Chapel quoted earlier, show the alliterating syllables in bold type:

With that the **w**arrior in the **w**ood **w**renches his bridle,
 Hit the **h**orse with his **h**eels as **h**ard as he could,
Leaps him over the **l**and and **l**eaves the knight there
 (2152-54)

The poet occasionally takes liberties so that, for example, some lines have only two alliterating syllables and others have four, as shown in the three lines immediately preceding the passage just quoted:

“Now farewell, by **G**od’s wounds, **G**awain the noble!
 For all the **g**old upon **g**round I would not **g**o with thee,
 Nor bear thee **f**ellowship through this **f**orest one **f**oot **f**urther.”
 (2149–51)

Note how in the first line (2149) the first sounds of *God’s* and *Gawain* carry primary alliteration, while the **W** of *farewell*, *wounds*, and the second half of *Gawain* add a second, subtle layer of alliteration. In the third line (2151), four words alliterate on *f*, including the final word *further*, which by traditional rules should not alliterate. These two examples only scratch the surface of the variability in the alliteration and rhythm of the lines throughout the poem. Some lines, for example, have more stressed syllables without alliteration, and a few have no alliteration at all (Borroff 1962).

The long alliterative line, however, is not the only kind of line in *Sir Gawain*. Each of its stanzas closes with a five-line coda, called a “bob and wheel,” which begins with a two-syllable turn (the bob) leading to four trimeter lines (the wheel), which together follow the

rhyme *a-b-a-b-a*. The following passage begins with the lines already given, which lead into the bob and wheel that ends the stanza:

“Now farewell, by **G**od’s wounds **G**awain the noble!
For all the **g**old upon **g**round I would not **g**o with thee,
Nor bear thee **f**ellowship through this **f**orest one foot fur-
ther.”

With that the **w**arrior in the **w**ood **w**renches his bridle,
Hit the **h**orse with his *heels* as **h**ard as he could,
Leaps him over the **l**and and **l**eaves the knight there

Alone. *a*

“By God’s self,” quoth Gawain, *b*

“I will neither gripe nor groan; *a*

Of God’s will I am certain, *b*

And I know that I am His own.” *a*

(2149-59)

The alliterations and rhymes in the translation remain faithful wherever possible to the original Middle English, given here for the sake of comparison:

“Now fareȝ wel, on **G**odeȝ half, **G**awayn þe noble!
For alle þe **g**olde vpon **g**rounde I nolde **g**o wyth þe,
Ne bere þe **f**elazschip þurȝ þis **f**ryth on **f**ote **f**yrre.”

Bi þat þe **w**ȳze in þe **w**od **w**endeȝ his brydel,
Hit þe **h**ors with þe **h**eȝe as **h**arde as he myȝt,
Lepeȝ hym ouer þe **l**aunde, and **l**eueȝ þe knyȝt þere

Alone. *a*

“Bi Goddeȝ self,” quop Gawayn, *b*

“I wyl nauȝer grete ne grone; *a*

To Goddez wyllle I am ful bayn, b
 And to Hym I haf me tone." a
 (2149-59)

Many of the words from the original are simply repackaged with modern spellings (e.g., *nauper* becomes *neither*), but the translation necessarily must make some adjustments. Note, for example, that in modern English the **W** of *wrenches* (2152) does not actually alliterate—call it eye-alliteration—because the initial sound in the pronunciation of the word is *r*; and the rhymes in the bob and tail are sometimes inexact, as with *Gawain* and *certain*. In line after line, however, the translation preserves the essential texture of the original. If the alliterative line seems unfamiliar to the eyes of modern readers, we need to remember that the appearance on the page is deceptive because it is visual, not aural. The lines need to be heard. Follow the poet's advice—"If you will listen to this lay . . . I shall tell it . . . With tongue"—and read it aloud. You will find the cadences familiar after all.

Compared with other poems in the Alliterative Revival, *Sir Gawain* shows a remarkably cavalier attitude toward the conventions of the alliterative line. Perhaps chief among these is the prohibition against alliteration on the final stressed syllable; yet we see an example with *one foot further* in the passage above, and there are many more such liberties. As mentioned earlier, some lines pile up more alliterative sounds than the three required in a conventional line, while others lack alliteration altogether. Even the hero's name seems unstable; it is occasionally spelled *Wawain* and alliterates on *w*. Why this looseness? We can reject the idea that the poet lacked adequate control of his medium and wrote shabby lines because of inferior skills. Quite the opposite. The poem *Pearl* in the same

manuscript is a masterpiece of versecraft, perhaps unequalled in all of English literature. Written in twelve-lines stanzas with precise alliteration and a demanding rhyme scheme (*a-b-a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c*), it repeats a key word at the first and last line of each stanza within a section; it has still other exacting formal features. Clearly the poet who wrote *Pearl* could adhere to the comparatively slight demands of the alliterative line in *Gawain*. It is as if in turning to *Sir Gawain* the poet says with a wink, "Let's loosen things up." Because poetic form, far from being mere window-dressing, serves to shape interpretation, *Sir Gawain's* verse form sends a message that is full of energy, is somewhat whimsical, does not take itself too seriously, and toys with conventions without undermining them. It inserts itself into the alliterative tradition in a self-conscious, self-confident way.

This calculated looseness should not be taken to mean that the poem lacks formal control. Evidence of careful design is everywhere. In broad terms *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* consists of 101 stanzas of varying length, most of which are between twenty and thirty lines including the bob and wheel. The manuscript divides the narrative into four sections of uneven length:

- (I) lines 1 to 490, the initial challenge up to the end of the first year;
- (II) 491 to 1125, Gawain's journey and arrival at Hautdesert;
- (III) 1126 to 1997, the hunting and bedroom scenes; and
- (IV) 1998 to 2530, the episode at the Green Chapel and denouement.

In addition to these broad divisions, still other formal features show the hand of a poet sure of his narrative skills: repeated images,

parallel scenes, numerical patternings, rich symbols, character development, and more. Because of this depth the poem has always provided fertile ground for literary close readings — which brings us from the poet as a master of versecraft to the poet as a master story-teller.

Genre and Sources

In creating *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the poet turned to what was by the fourteenth century a shopworn genre in England. The high point of Arthurian romance came two centuries earlier, when Chrétien de Troyes and other authors swept onto the scene with the most innovative form of vernacular literature in Europe. They did so by yoking together the stories of Arthur and his court with the sensibility now known as courtly love or *fin'amor*. Along with amorous idolization, the ethos of courtly love exalted the importance of a knight's honor and chivalrous code of conduct. That Chrétien and others wrote in French was no obstacle to the genre's reception in England, where educated persons above a certain rung on the social ladder, from wealthy merchants to nobility, could be expected to have some command of the language. Over time the freshness of Arthurian romance subsided, and other genres began to take its place. Yet it never disappeared altogether (and aspects persist even today). Some of Chaucer's works incorporate the conventions of courtly love, for example in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale*, but it is telling that in *The Canterbury Tales*—and indeed in all of his works—the only Arthurian romance is the tale assigned to the Wife of Bath. However, even if poets rarely cultivated the genre in fourteenth-century England, an impressive number of manuscripts with older French Arthurian romances were owned

by Englishmen. Two hundred years after Chrétien, "French Arthurian romances were still being read in bulk in England. . . . [They were] quite simply the most popular form of literary entertainment in the higher strata of society" (Putter 1995, 2).

When the *Gawain*-poet takes up the genre, it is old, familiar, and somewhat nostalgic. As an author his challenge is to breathe life back into it. The first two stanzas give a synopsis of the historical genealogy of Arthur going back to Brutus and Troy, and the poem's final stanza circles back the same history, gesturing to "the best book of romance" and the "Brutus books" (2521, 2523) to lend ancient authority to the tale. This gesture to written authority (often an empty gesture, as here) is itself a time-honored convention, but in fact there are no known sources for the complete *Sir Gawain*. The poet took traditional materials and reworked them into a poem that resembles nothing else that comes before it.

The beheading scene, or more precisely the exchange of blows—a theme well-attested in folklore—seems to go back ultimately to a Celtic source, but the *Gawain*-poet most likely encountered it in *Le Livre de Caradoc*, which forms part of the First Continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval*, which as with other French romances remained popular in England (Benson 1965, 16). What is most remarkable, however, are the systematic changes that the *Gawain*-poet makes to this source, so that little other than the basic framework of the exchange of blows remains. Even a quick glance at similar parts of *Caradoc* and *Sir Gawain* is enough to reveal the profound transformation.

On the other hand, the temptation scenes, the hunting scenes, and the exchange of winnings motif are less clearly dependent on any sources known to us. Even if there were sources now lost, it seems certain that the *Gawain*-poet reworked them as thoroughly for his purposes as he did *Caradoc*. Most significantly, he transforms

each of these traditional sources or themes as he weaves them into a unified story in the service of a guiding artistic vision.

For example, the opening two-stanza prologue emphasizes the chronological distance between the reader and Camelot. One way this is achieved is by making Arthur and his contemporaries child-like as they enjoy the innocent pleasures of their Yule festivities. Arthur is “youthful” and “juvenile” with “young blood”; and upon surveying the court, the Green Knight insults Arthur and his knights by calling them “beardless children.” This emphasis on human youthfulness superimposed on the chronological distance of Camelot reinforces the narrator’s judgment that “this fair folk” was “in their first age,” an age that, however noble and chivalric, is also naive in its remote innocence. The poet’s or the reader’s society, by contrast, may be older and wiser, but such experience comes at the cost of skepticism about the noblest human ideals. The important point, however, is that these details reveal the imaginative power of the Gawain-poet in manipulating traditional material. There is nothing like it in *Caradoc*.

Narrative Technique

The best way to introduce the poem’s narrative technique is to plunge into a sample passage. In the beheading scene at the Chapel, the Green Knight makes two feints with his ax before delivering a “snick” on Gawain’s neck. Upon seeing drops of his blood fall on the snow, Gawain springs away and turns in vigorous challenge, assuming a fighting stance. The Green Knight will have none of it, as is clear from what today we would call his body language:

The horseman held himself back, and on his ax rested,
Set the shaft upon shore, and on the sharp leaned,

And looked to the liegeman that on the land went
How that doughty, dreadless, dauntless there stands
Armed, full fearless: in heart it pleases him. (2331–35)

The visual contrast of Bertilak's leaning on his ax while looking with amused detachment at Gawain braced for a fight says more about their respective attitudes than dozens of lines of description possibly could. On the one side is a display of valor appropriate to an Arthurian knight, on the other a posture that is indifferent to that valor. The grisly ax becomes a prop for relaxation. Like a painting in two panels, the two images perform an important narrative function, because now the reader's point of view begins to align with Bertilak's. Up to this point the narrative has privileged Gawain's experiences, his adherence to the chivalric code. But Bertilak's relaxed pose subtly draws the reader away from Gawain's perspective, especially after the potentially comic preparation to fight (he broad-jumps and claps his helmet on his head); yet Gawain's reaction "pleases" the reader "in heart" as it does Bertilak. Despite the distancing, despite the fact that the poem does not simply celebrate chivalric ideals as would, say, a French romance from an earlier generation, the reader can nevertheless admire Gawain for his chivalry. To describe this complex yet deft narrative balancing act, Benson makes a useful distinction between unromantic and antiromantic sympathies (Benson 1965, 243). An antiromantic narrative criticizes the unrealistic ideals of pure romance, where rigid adherence to an idealized code of honor leads to self-destruction, as it does eventually to the entire Round Table. The unromantic merely adopts a point of view outside the romance's frame of reference and accepts it as a literary convention. It says that romance is not to be mistaken for reality. Bertilak admires

Gawain for the reasons that the poem's readers have always done, but he holds back, leaning on his ax as he watches the action unfold, as if he were a character who can shift to a position outside of the romance genre. At this point it is as though he is in the romance but not of the romance.

This dichotomy between Bertilak's detachment and Gawain's earnestness continues in the following scene, when Bertilak reveals his admiration for Gawain's exemplary character: compared with other knights he is like a pearl among white peas. But he "lacked a little" in upholding his oath, because he took the girdle. Gawain responds with an outburst condemning himself for cowardice, covetousness, and falseness. What is Bertilak's response to Gawain's self-condemnation? He laughs "lovingly." In other words, Bertilak's laughter does not spring from mockery or contempt but rather from a generosity of spirit because he can see beyond Gawain's horizons of romance, or he finds himself on the outside looking in. Gawain's earnest confession may be appropriate for a knight upholding the absolute ideals of chivalry, but from Bertilak's unromantic point of view those ideals remain out of reach to fallible humans and so excessive that they can seem comic.

The diptych of the Green Knight leaning on his ax and Gawain braced to fight is but one example of the poet's characteristic and pervasive use of concrete visual images. It is not the only such image from this scene, because Gawain leaps away only after seeing his blood shoot to the earth, where it lies in "bright" contrast to the snow on the ground (2314–15). For him, the red blood on white snow is a sign of life. An attentive reader might also be reminded of parallels to the Lady's complexion "Both white and red in blend" (1205) when she first visits him in bed, or even the Green Knight's

red eyes (303) as he surveys Arthur's court. Elsewhere, the detailed description of slaughtering and dressing the slain deer, for example, seems to relish visual detail for its own sake. Such emphasis on the concrete creates a sense of realism, making Gawain's blood and the deer's carcass each within imaginative grasp.

The poem's expert use of visual detail contributes to the psychological portrayal of character. For the most part the narrative does not disclose the thoughts and emotions of Gawain or other characters via an omniscient narrator, yet there is no doubt about Gawain's terror when he hears the loud noise of the grindstone sharpening the Green Knight's ax, or his confusion when Lady Bertilak first approaches him in bed, because the concrete descriptions shade toward his point of view.

Another measure of the poem's careful construction are the various symmetries built in to the narrative. Parallels abound: two castles and two courts, two beheading scenes, two confession scenes, a double identity for the Green Knight/Bertilak, and more. The three-part parallels are less frequent, but no less significant. Each of the three hunting scenes is interrupted by the bedroom scene of Lady Bertilak's morning visits to Gawain, where (in a brilliant piece of narrative patterning) she is the hunter and he is her quarry. Even at a level as small as the verse line, the first half balances the second, linked by alliteration; and the syntax often works by juxtaposing one clause with another, which allows the reader to interpret what the pairing means. The poem's architectural symmetry is pervasive, from the smallest detail to the largest elements of structure.

The poem is no less rich in symbolism, even if the values symbolized are often ambiguous. A partial list would include the intruding knight's green color, the holly sprig he carries, the pentangle on Gawain's shield (with its elaborate description), the animals

hunted, the tumulus “chapel,” and the winter season — including the winter solstice, snow, the feast of Christmas, and New Year’s day. Might the snow, for example, signify innocence in its blankness? Or cold sterility? Or seasonal death? Or instead of death, does it become a sign of a fresh start in life, not unlike baptism, after Gawain’s blood hits it? Does it signify the soul’s purity after confession? The green girdle is richly malleable in what it signifies, because Lady Bertilak, the Green Knight, Gawain, and the Arthurian court each ascribe different values to it at different times. And the meaning ascribed is a sure indication of the lesson drawn from Gawain’s adventures by each interpreter.

Themes

As an Arthurian romance, the core themes revolve around Gawain’s reputation as a lover and as a fighter; the former is measured by his courtesy and the latter by his bravery. Today (not the fourteenth century) both aspects of the romance hero are conveyed by the term “chivalry.” On two occasions Gawain’s public reputation for chivalry is called into question. Although both are delivered in mock-seriousness, the accusation stings. “But that ye be Gawain,” accuses the Lady at the end of their first interview in the bedroom, “it goes against what I know.” (1293; similarly 1481) The real Gawain, the Gawain known through old romances, would not part company after spending so much time with a lady without craving a kiss “by his courtesy.” He apologizes, they kiss, and the game of exchanging kisses begins. “Thou art not Gawain,” accuses the Green Knight after Gawain flinches when the ax first comes down, because his courage has failed him: “thou fleest for fear ere thou feel harms!” (2270, 2272) These two accusations strike at the core of Gawain’s public reputation as a lover and a fighter,

although each is less a serious accusation than a rhetorical ploy calculated to manipulate him.

What ultimately motivates Gawain's reputation as a lover and a fighter is a sense of honor, or its more tangible manifestation known as *trawpe* in the original, which is here translated as *troth*. The word's meaning in the fourteenth century has the practical connotations of keeping one's word in society; it is both personal and public, yet the public aspect is indispensable (Green 1999). It is important to bear this in mind, because today "honor" can seem more of an abstraction, like an inner virtue somehow nurtured outside of public view, or like funds kept in a bank account ready for occasional withdrawals. In an Arthurian romance honor is nothing if it is not public; it is nothing if it is not displayed in action. After he is beheaded in Camelot, the Green Knight enjoins Gawain to seek him out in a year and a day *bi þi trawpe*, in the words of the original, and Gawain answers that he will, *by my seker trawep*, "by my sure troth." As important as it is that Gawain stakes his personal reputation on keeping his word, it is just as important that he declares it in a public setting. Later in the story, when the guide tries to dissuade Gawain from completing his quest at the green chapel, part of the shame of turning away would be the very unpublic nature of such a dishonorable course of action.

Honor, courtesy, and bravery are staples of almost any romance. Another prevalent theme in *Sir Gawain* involves game-playing. In any game, whether it is tic-tac-toe or the most complex role-playing game, the participants agree to abide by a set of rules that guides their actions. It is limited in having a beginning and an end, and its rules are typically separate from the usual rules of conduct in society. Unless something is amiss, people know when they are engaging in a game and when they are not, and playing it should give pleasure. Some games can be spontaneous, such as the ex-

change of blows proposed by the Green Knight on New Year's Day in Camelot. Before Gawain swings the ax, he swears to abide by the agreement which, despite its formal language of "troth" and the like, is essentially a game. The pleasure derived from decapitating a giant may be doubtful; the onlookers in Camelot seemed stunned—what kind of game is this?—which is one reason that no knight accepts the challenge at first. Fear is another. But once shamed into action, first Arthur and then Gawain accept the challenge because the return blow seems highly unlikely; from Gawain's perspective, how can he fail to win? Another spontaneous game is the exchange of winnings between Bertilak and Gawain. This one, by contrast, seems like frivolous fun, as host and guest publicly and ceremoniously exchange their winnings at the end of each day—such as three kisses for a fox skin—with much laughter. Its non-serious nature allows Gawain to convince himself to accept and conceal the green girdle in breach of the game's rules. After all, it's just a game. Yet these two games compose the plot of a poem with few peers: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Select Bibliography

Verse translations

- Armitage, Simon, trans. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A New Verse Translation*. 1st American ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2007.
- Borroff, Marie, trans. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. A New Verse Translation*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1967.
- Merwin, W. S., trans. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A New Verse Translation*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 2002.
- O'Donoghue, Bernard, trans. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Penguin Classics. London: Penguin, 2006.
- Tolkien, J. R. R., trans. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*. 1st American ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

Critical Studies

- Benson, Larry Dean. *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965.
- Borroff, Marie. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study*, Yale Studies in English, V. 152. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.
- Borroff, Marie, and Laura L. Howes, edd. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: An Authoritative Translation, Contexts, Criticism*. 1st ed, Norton Critical Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.
- Green, Richard Firth. *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England*, The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Hanna, Ralph, III. "Unlocking What's Locked: Gawain's Green Girdle." *Via-
tor: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 14 (1983): 289-302.

- Heng, Geraldine. "A Woman Wants: The Lady, Gawain, and the Forms of Seduction." *The Yale Journal of Criticism: Interpretation in the Humanities* 5, no. 3 (1992): 101-34.
- Mann, Jill. "Courtly Aesthetics and Courtly Ethics in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society* 31 (2009): 231-65.
- Putter, Ad. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Spearing, A. C. *The Gawain-Poet; a Critical Study*. Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1970.
- Staley, Lynn. *The Voice of the Gawain-Poet*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Stanbury, Sarah. *Seeing the Gawain-Poet: Description and the Act of Perception*, Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

Editions

- Andrew, Malcolm, and R. A. Waldron, edd. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. 5th ed., Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007.
- Tolkien, J. R. R., E. V. Gordon, and Norman Davis, ed. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

A Note on the Middle English Original Text

The Middle English text, edited by Donoghue, accepts for the most part the emendations found in Davis's revision of Gordon and Tolkien's edition (1967), with the following exceptions: *Ticius* (11), *glaumande* (line 46), *cayrez* (734), *nyzt* (929), *3if* (2343). It retains the letter yogh <ȝ> from the manuscript in word-final position when it conveys the sound [z], as in *cayrez*. Punctuation, capitalization, and word division have been changed throughout. The format of the alliterative lines follows the manuscript in leaving the mid-line caesura unmarked even though the rhythm of each line consistently breaks into two halves; the translation, however, indicates the caesura with a space as an aid to the reader.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

I

The Middle English Original

- 1 Siþen þe sege and þe assaut wat3 sesed at Troye,
 þe bor3 brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
 þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wrozt
 Wat3 tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erþe.
5 Hit wat3 Ennias þe athel, and his highe kynde,
 þat siþen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicome
 Wel neze of al þe wele in þe West Iles.
 Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
 With gret bobbaunce þat burze he biges vpon fyrst,
10 And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;
 Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
 Langaberde in Lombardie lyftes vp homes,
 And fer ouer þe French flod Felix Brutus
 On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he sette3
15 wyth wyne,
 Where werre and wrake and wonder
 Bi syþez hat3 wont þerinne,
 And oft boþe blysse and blunder
 Ful skete hat3 skyfted synne.

20 Ande quen þis Bretayn wat3 bigged bi þis burn rych,
 Bolde bredden þerinne—baret þat lofden—
 In mony turned tyme tene þat wrozten.
 Mo ferlyes on þis folde han fallen here oft
 Þen in any oþer þat I wot, syn þat ilk tyme.
25 Bot of alle þat here bult, of Bretaygne kynges,
 Ay wat3 Arthur þe hendest, as I haf herde telle.
 Forþi an aunter in erde I attle to schawe,

The Modern English Translation

- 1 Once the siege and assault had ceased at Troy,
The burg battered and burned to brands and ashes,
The trooper that the tricks of treason there wrought
Was tried for his treachery, the truest on earth.
- 5 It was Aeneas the noble and his high-born kin
Who then despoiled provinces and patrons became
Well nigh of all the wealth of the West Isles.
Then rich Romulus to Rome rushes him swiftly,
With great splendor that burg he builds at first,
- 10 And names it his own name, as it now has.
Ticius to Tuscany and towns he builds;
Longabeard in Lombardy lifts up homes;
And far over the French Flood Felix Brutus
On many banks full broad Britain he sets
- 15 To begin.
 Where war and wrack and wonder
 Have often flourished there-in,
 And oft both bliss and blunder
 Have ruled in turn since then.
- 20 And when this Britain was built by this brave knight
Bold men bred there-in— battles they loved—
Who in many a turbulent time troubles have wrought.
More wonders on this field have befallen here oft
Than on any other that I know since that noble time.
- 25 But of all that here built of British kings
Ever was Arthur the most elegant, as I have heard tell.
Therefore an earthly adventure I aim to show,

Pat a selly in sizt summe men hit holden,
 And an outrage awenture of Arthurez wonderez.
 30 If ze wyl lysten þis laye bot on littel quile,
 I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde,
 with tonge,
 As hit is stad and stoken
 In stori stif and stronge,
 35 With lel letteres loken,
 In londe so hatz ben longe.

Pis kyng lay at Camylot vpon Krystmasse
 With mony luflych lorde, ledez of þe best,
 Rekeny of þe Rounde Table alle þo rich breþer,
 40 With rych reuel oryzt and rechles merþes.
 Per tournayed tulkes by tyme3 ful mony,
 Justed ful jolilé þise gentyle kniztes,
 Syþen kayred to þe court caroles to make.
 For þer þe fest wat3 ilyche ful fiften dayes,
 45 With alle þe mete and þe mirþe þat men coupe avyse;
 Such glaumande gle glorious to here,
 Dere dyn vpon day, daunsyng on nyztes,
 Al wat3 hap vpon heze in hallez and chambrez
 With lordez and ladies, as leuest him þo3t.
 50 With all þe wele of þe worlde þay woned þer samen,
 Þe most kyd kny3tez vnder Krystes seluen,
 And þe louelokkest ladies þat euer lif haden,
 And he þe comlokest kyng þat þe court haldes;
 For al wat3 þis fayre folk in her first age,
 55 on sille,
 Þe hapnest vnder heuen,
 Kyng hy3est mon of wylle;

That a strange sight some men it hold,
And an awesome adventure of Arthur's wonders.
30 If you will listen to this lay but a little while
I shall tell it at once, as I in town heard
With tongue,
As it is set down and struck
In story stout and strong.
35 With true letters interlocked
In this land as has been long.

This king lay at Camelot upon Christmas time
With many loyal lords, lads of the best,
Renowned of the Round Table all those rich brethren,
40 With rich revel aright and reckless mirth.
There tourneyed troopers by times full many,
Jousted full jollily these gentle knights,
Then came to the court carols to make,
For there the feasting was the same for a full fifteen days
45 With all the meals and the mirth that man could devise;
Such gladness and glee glorious to hear,
Dear din upon day, dancing at night;
All was happiness on high in halls and chambers,
With lords and ladies, and most lovely it seemed.
50 With all the wealth of the world they dwelt there together,
The best known knights under Christ Himself,
And the loveliest ladies that ever life had,
And he the comeliest king that the court holds;
For all was this fair folk in their first age,
55 And still
The most fortunate known to fame,
The king highest man of will.

Hit were now gret nye to neuen
So hardy a here on hille.

- 60 Wyle Nw 3er wat3 so 3ep þat hit wat3 nwe cummen,
Pat day doubble on þe dece wat3 þe douth serued,
Fro þe kyng wat3 cummen with kny3tes into þe halle,
Pe chauntré of þe chapel cheued to an ende.
Loude crye wat3 þer kest of clerkez and oper,
- 65 "Nowel" nayted onewe, neuened ful ofte;
And syþen riche forth runnen to reche hondeselle,
3ezed "3eres-3iftes!" on hi3, 3elde hem bi hond,
Debated busyly aboute þo giftes;
Ladies la3ed ful loude, þo3 þay lost haden,
- 70 And he þat wan wat3 not wrothe, þat may 3e wel trawe.
Alle þis mirþe þay maden to þe mete tyme.
When þay had waschen worþyly þay wenten to sete,
Pe best burne ay abof, as hit best semed;
Whene Guenore, ful gay, grayþed in þe myddes,
- 75 Dressed on þe dere des, dubbed al aboute,
Smal sendal bisides, a selure hir ouer
Of tryed tolouse, and tars tapites innoghe,
Pat were enbrawdred and beten wyth þe best gemmes
Pat myzt be preued of prys wyth penyes to bye,
- 80 in daye.
Pe comlokest to discrye
Pe glent with y3en gray;
A semloker þat euer he sy3e
Soth mozt no mon say.

It would now be hard to name
So hardy a host on hill.

60 While New Year was so young, since it was newly come,
That day with double portions were the diners served,
For the king was come with knights into the hall,
The chanting in the chapel achieved an end.
Loud cries were there cast by clerics and others,
65 "Noel" named anew, announced full oft;
And then the rich run forth to render presents
Yelled "Year's gifts!" on high, yielding them by hand,
Debated busily about those gifts;
Ladies laughed full loud, though they had lost,
70 And he that won was not wroth, that may you well believe.
All this mirth they made until the meal time.
When they had washed worthily, they went to sit,
The best brave always above, as it best seemed;
Queen Guenevere, full gay, graced the middle,
75 Bedecked on the dear dais, adorned all about,
Fine silk at her sides, a ceiling above
Of rich cloth of Toulouse, and of Tartary many tapestries
Embroidered and bedecked with the best gems
That might be proven in price with pounds to buy
80 In our day.
The comeliest to see
There gleamed with eyes of gray;
A fairer that ever could be
In sooth might no man say.

85 Bot Arthure wolde not ete til al were serued,
 He watȝ so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered:
 His lif liked hym lyȝt; he louied þe lasse
 Auþer to longe lye or to longe sitte,
 So bisied him his zonge blod and his brayn wylde.
 90 And also an oþer maner meued him eke
 Pat he þurȝ nobelay had nomen: he wolde neuer ete
 Vpon such a dere day er hym deuised were
 Of sum auenturus þyng, an vncouþe tale,
 Of sum mayn meruayle þat he myȝt trawe,
 95 Of alderes, of armes, of oþer auenturus,
 Oþer sum segg hym bisoȝt of sum siker knyȝt
 To joyne wyth hym in iustying, in jopardé to lay
 Lede lif for lyf, leue vchon oþer
 As fortune wolde fulsun hom, þe fayrer to haue.
 100 Þis watȝ þe kynges countenaunce where he in court were,
 At vch farand fest among his fre meny
 in halle.
 Þerfore of face so fere
 He stiztleȝ stif in stalle.
 105 Ful ȝep in þat Nw ȝere
 Much mirthe he mas withalle.

Thus þer stondes in stale þe stif kyng hisseluen,
 Talkkande bifore þe hyȝe table of trifles ful hende.
 There gode Gawan watȝ grayþed Gwenore bisyde,
 110 And Agrauayn a la Dure Mayn on þat oþer syde sittes,
 Boþe þe kynges sistersunes and ful siker kniztes.
 Bischoþ Bawdewyn abof bigineȝ þe table,
 And Ywan, Vryn son, ette with hymselfuen.

85 But Arthur would not eat until all were served,
 He was so jolly and joyful, and somewhat juvenile:
 He liked his life light; he loved least
 Either too long to lie or too long to sit
 So busied him his young blood and his brain wild.
 90 And also another matter moved him as well,
 That he had adopted for nobility: he would never eat
 Upon such a dear day ere he was told
 Of some adventurous thing, an astonishing tale
 Of some mighty marvel that he might believe
 95 Of our elders, of arms, of other adventures,
 Or some stalwart besought him for some true knight
 To join with him in jousting, in jeopardy to lay
 At risk life for life, each happy if the other
 By Fortune was favored the advantage to have.
 100 This was the king's custom whenever he was in court
 At each fine feast among his fair retinue
 In hall.
 Therefore of face so fair
 He stands strong at his stall.
 105 Full youthful in that New Year,
 Much mirth he makes with all.

 Thus there stands at his stall the strong king himself,
 Talking before the high table of trifles full courtly.
 There good Gawain was seated Guenevere beside,
 110 And Agravain of the Hard Hand on that other side sits,
 Both the king's sister's sons and full sure knights.
 Bishop Baldwin above begins the table
 And Ywain, Urien's son, ate with Arthur himself.

115 Pise were digt on þe des and derworþly serued,
 And siþen mony siker segge at þe sidbordez.
 Pen þe first cors come with crakkyng of trumpes,
 Wyth mony baner ful bryzt þat þerbi hanged;
 Nwe nakryn noyse with þe noble pipes,
 Wylde werbles and wyzt wakned lote,
 120 Pat mony hert ful hize hef at her towches.
 Dayntés dryuen þerwyth of ful dere metes,
 Foyssoun of þe fresche, and on so fele disches
 Pat pine to fynde þe place þe peple biforne
 For to sette þe sylueren þat sere sewes halden
 125 on clothe.
 Iche lede as he loued hymselfe
 Þer lazt withouten loþe;
 Ay two had disches twelue,
 Good ber and bryzt wyn boþe.

 130 Now wyl I of hor seruise say yow no more,
 For vch wyze may wel wit no wont þat þer were.
 An oper noyse ful newe nezed biliue,
 Pat þe lude myzt haf leue liflode to cach;
 For vneþe wat3 þe noyce not a whyle sesed,
 135 And þe fyrst cource in þe court kyndely serued,
 Þer hales in at þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,
 On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe,
 Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,
 And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete,
 140 Half etayn in erde I hope þat he were;
 Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene,
 And þat þe myriest in his muckel þat myzt ride,
 For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,

These were dining on the dais, diligently served,
 115 And next were many sure stalwarts at the sideboards.
 Then the first course came with cracking of trumpets
 With many banners full bright that there-by hung;
 New noise of drums with the noble pipes,
 Wild warbles and loud wakened echoes,
 120 That many hearts heaved full high at their notes.
 Dainties drummed in there-with of many dear foods,
 Full plenty of fresh food and on so many fair dishes
 That it was a pain to find place the people before
 To set the silver that held the separate stews
 125 On cloth.
 Each lad as he loved himself
 There dined, nothing loath;
 Each two had dishes twelve,
 Good beer and bright wine both.

 130 Now will I of their service say you no more,
 For each warrior may well know no want was there.
 Another noise full new quickly came nigh
 That the lord might have leave to lift up his food,
 For hardly was the noise not a while ceased,
 135 And the first course in the court courteously served,
 There hastens in at the hall door an awesome figure,
 One of the most on earth in measure of height,
 From the neck to the waist so well-built and square,
 And his loins and his limbs so long and so big
 140 Half a giant in earth I affirm that he was;
 Yet man must I nonetheless admit him to be
 And that the merriest in his muchness that might ride,
 For though of back and of breast his body was stout,

Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,
145 And alle his fetures folyande, in forme þat he hade,
ful clene;
For wonder of his hwe men hade,
Set in his semblaunt sene:
He ferde as freke were fade,
150 And oueral enker grene.

Ande al grayped in grene þis gome and his wedes:
A strayte cote ful streȝt, þat stek on his sides,
A meré mantile abof, mensked withinne
With pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene
155 With blyþe blaunner ful bryȝt, and his hod boþe,
þat watȝ laȝt fro his lokkeȝ and layde on his schulderes;
Heme wel-haled hose of þat same,
þat spenet on his sparlyr, and clene spures vnder
Of bryȝt golde, vpon silk bordes barred ful ryche,
160 And scholes vnder schankes þere þe schalk rides,
And alle his vesture uerayly watȝ clene verdure,
Boþe þe barres of his belt and oþer blyþe stones,
þat were richely rayled in his aray clene
Aboutte hymself and his sadel, vpon silk werkeȝ.
165 þat were to tor for to telle of tryfles þe halue
þat were enbrauded abof, wyth bryddes and flyȝes,
With gay gaudi of grene, þe golde ay inmyddes,
þe pendauntes of his payttrure, þe proude cropure;
His molaynes, and alle þe metail anamayld was þenne,
170 þe steropes þat he stod on stayned of þe same,
And his arsounȝ al after and his aþel skyrtes,
þat euer glemered and glent al of grene stones.

Both his belly and his waist were worthily slim,
 145 And all his features conforming, in form that he had,
 Full clean.
 But great wonder of the hue men had
 Set in his complexion seen:
 He fared like a fighter to dread,
 150 And over all deep green.

 And all garbed in green this gallant and his clothes:
 A straight coat full tight that stuck to his sides,
 A merry mantle above, embellished within
 With finely trimmed furs, a facing full bright
 155 Of handsome white ermine and his hood as well,
 That was lifted from his locks and laid on his shoulders;
 Neat well-fitting hose of that same green
 That covered his calves, and shining spurs below
 Of bright gold, on silken borders embroidered full rich,
 160 And with fine shoes below the shanks the chevalier rides,
 And all his vesture verily was verdant green,
 Both the bars of his belt and other bright stones,
 That were richly arranged in his array completely
 About himself and his saddle, upon silk works
 165 That would be too toilsome to tell of trifles the half
 That were embroidered above, with insects, and birds
 With gay gems of green, and gold intermingled,
 The pendants of his horse trappings, the proud crupper;
 His mount's bit and all the metal enamelled was then,
 170 The stirrups that he stood on colored the same,
 And his saddle-bow next and its elegant skirts
 That ever glimmered and glowed all of green stones.

175 A grene hors gret and pikke,
 A stede ful stif to strayne;
 In brawdren brydel quik,
 To þe gome he watȝ ful gayn.

200 He loked as layt so lyȝt,
 So sayd al þat hym syȝe;
 Hit semed as no mon myȝt
 Vnder his dyntteȝ dryȝe.

The foal he fares on fully of that same hue,

Certain:

175 A green horse great and thick,
A steed full stiff to restrain;
In embroidered bridle quick,
For the gallant who held the rein.

Well gay was this gallant and his gear in green,
180 And the hair of his head matching his horse.
Fair fanning locks enfold his shoulders,
A beard big as a bush over his breast hangs
That with the noble hair that from his head reaches
Was clipped all around above his elbows
185 That half his arms there-under were held in the manner
Of a king's cape that encloses his neck;
The mane of that mighty horse much to it like,
Well curled and combed with knots full many,
Tied in with gold thread about the fair green,
190 Always one strand of hair, another of gold,
His tail and his topknot twisted in braids,
And both bound with a band of bright green,
Adorned with full dear gems to the top of the tuft,
Then bound tightly with a thong, trickily knotted above,
195 Where many bells full bright of burnished gold rang.
Such a foal in the field nor fighter that rides him
Was never seen in that hall with sight ere that time
With eye.

He looked like lightning as light,
200 Said all that saw him come nigh;
It seemed that no man might
Such blows as his defy.

Wheper hade he no helme ne hawbergh nauþer,
 Ne no pysan ne no plate þat pented to armes,
 205 Ne no schafte ne no schelde to schwue ne to smyte,
 Bot in his on honde he hade a holyn bobbe,
 Pat is grattest in grene when greuez ar bare,
 And an ax in his oþer, a hoge and vnmete,
 A spetos sparþe to expoun in spelle, quoso myzt.
 210 Þe lenkþe of an elnzerde þe large hede hade,
 Þe grayn al of grene stele and of golde hewen.
 Þe bit burnyst bryzt, with a brod egge
 As wel schapen to schere as scharp rasores.
 Þe stele of a stif staf þe sturne hit bi grypte,
 215 Pat watȝ wunden wyth yrn to þe wandez ende,
 And al bigrauen with grene in gracios werkes;
 A lace lapped aboute, þat louked at þe hede,
 And so after þe halme halched ful ofte,
 Wyth tryed tasselez þerto tacched innoze
 220 On botounȝ of þe bryzt grene brayden ful ryche.
 Pis hapel heldez hym in and þe halle entres,
 Driuande to þe heȝe dece — dut he no woþe;
 Haylsed he neuer one, bot heȝe he ouer loked.
 Þe fyrst word þat he warp, "Wher is," he sayd,
 225 "Þe gouernour of þis gyng? Gladly I wolde
 Se þat segg in syȝt, and with hymself speke
 raysoun."
 To knyȝtez he kest his yȝe,
 And reled hym vp and doun;
 230 He stemmed, and con studie
 Quo walt þer most renoun.

Yet he had no helmet nor hauberk neither,
 Nor any armor nor plate that pertained to arms,
 205 Nor any spear nor any shield to shove nor to smite,
 But in his one hand he had a holly branch,
 That is greatest in green when groves are bare,
 And an ax in his other, awesome and monstrous,
 A spiteful ax to describe in speech, if anyone could.
 210 Near four feet in length the large head had,
 With a spike of green steel and of hammered gold.
 The bit burnished bright with a broad edge,
 As well shaped to shear as a sharp razor.
 By the hilt of the strong shaft that stern one it gripped
 215 That was wound with iron to the weapon's end,
 And all engraved with green in gracious works;
 By a lace sash, coiled about, that was tied at the head
 And so down the shaft looped full oft,
 With fine tassles there-to attached there-by,
 220 And buttons of bright green, embroidered full rich.
 This horseman held his way in and the hall enters,
 Driving to the high dais— no danger he feared;
 Hailed he never any one but high he looked over.
 The first word that he whipped out: "Where is," he said,
 225 "The governor of this gang? Gladly I would
 See that stalwart in sight and speak with himself
 And reason."
 To knights he cast his eyes
 And rolled them up and down;
 230 He stopped and studied to surmise
 Who wields there most renown.

Ther watȝ loking on lenȝe þe lude to beholde,
 For vch mon had meruayle quat hit mene myȝt
 Pat a haȝel and a horse myȝt such a hwe lach.
 235 As growe grene as þe gres and grener hit semed,
 Pen grene aumayl on golde glowande bryȝter.
 Al studied þat þer stod, and stalked hym nerre
 Wyth al þe wonder of þe worlde what he worch schulde,
 For fele sellyeȝ had þay sen, bot such neuer are;
 240 Forþi for fantoum and fayryȝe þe folk þere hit demed.
 Þerfore to answare watȝ arȝe mony aȝel freke,
 And al stouned at his steuen and stonstil seten
 In a swoȝe sylence þurȝ þe sale riche;
 As al were slypped vpon slepe so slaked hor loteȝ
 245 in hyȝe —
 I deme hit not al for doute,
 Bot sum for cortaysye —
 Bot let hym þat al schulde loute
 Cast vnto þat wyȝe.

 250 Penn Arpour bifore þe hiȝ dece þat auenture byholdeȝ,
 And rekenly hym reuerenced, for rad was he neuer,
 And sayde, “Wyȝe, welcum iwys to þis place;
 Þe hede of þis ostel Arthour I hat;
 Liȝt luflych adoun and lenge, I þe praye,
 255 And quat-so þy wylle is we schal wyt after.”
 “Nay, as help me,” quop þe haȝel, “he þat on hyȝe syttes,
 To wone any quyle in þis won, hit watȝ not myn ernde;
 Bot for þe los of þe, lede, is lyft vp so hyȝe,
 And þy burȝ and þy burnes best ar holden,

There was looking at length the liegeman to behold,
 For each man had marvel what it might mean
 That a horsemen and a horse might have such a hue.
 235 As green as the growing grass and greener it seemed
 Than green enamel on gold glowing brighter.
 All studied that there stood and stalked him nearer,
 With all the wonder of the world of what he would do,
 For many spectacles had they seen but such as this never;
 240 Thus from fantasy and fairyland the folk there it deemed.
 Therefore to answer were afraid many elegant fighters,
 And all were astounded by his speech, and sat stone-still
 In a swooning dead stillness through the silent hall,
 As if all were slipped into sleep so slackened their noises
 245 On high—
 I deem it not all for fear,
 But some, for courtesy shy,
 Let him whom all should revere
 To that warrior give reply.

 250 Then Arthur before the high dais that adventure beholds
 And rightly revered him, for feared was he never,
 And said "Warrior, welcome indeed to this place;
 The head of this hostel Arthur I am called
 Light lovely adown and linger I pray thee
 255 And whatever thy will is we shall know later,"
 "Nay, so help me," quoth the horseman, "He that on high sits,
 To dwell any while in this dwelling was not my errand;
 But for the laud of thee, lad, is lifted up so high,
 And thy burg and thy braves best are held,

- 260 Stifest vnder stel-gere on stedes to ryde,
 þe wyztest and þe worþyest of þe worldes kynde,
 Preue for to play wyth in oþer pure laykez,
 And here is kydde cortaysye, as I haf herd carp,
 And þat hatz wayned me hider, iwyis, at þis tyme.
- 265 3e may be seker bi þis braunch þat I bere here
 Pat I passe as in pes, and no plyzt seche,
 For had I founded in fere in feztynge wyse,
 I haue a hauberze at home and a helme boþe,
 A schelde and a scharp spere, schinande bryzt,
- 270 Ande oþer weppenes to welde, I wene wel, als;
 Bot for I wolde no were, my wedez ar softer.
 Bot if þou be so bold as alle burnez tellen,
 þou wyl grant me godly þe gomen þat I ask,
 bi ryzt."
- 275 Arthour con onsware
 And sayd, "Sir cortays knyzt,
 If þou craue batayl bare,
 Here faylez þou not to fyzt."
- "Nay, frayst I no fyzt, in fayth I þe telle.
- 280 Hit arn aboute on þis bench bot berdlez chylder.
 If I were hasped in armes on a heze stede,
 Here is no mon me to mach, for myztez so wayke.
 Forþy I craue in þis court a Crystemas gomen,
 For hit is 3ol and Nwe 3er, and here ar zep mony.
- 285 If any so hardy in þis hous holdez hymselfen
 Be so bolde in his blod, brayn in hys hede
 Pat dar stifly strike a strok for an oþer
 I schal gif hym of my gyft þys giserne ryche,

260 Stoutest under steel gear on steeds to ride,
 The strongest and the worthiest of this world's kind,
 With prowess in jousting and other pure sports,
 And here is famed courtesy, as I have heard claimed,
 And that has drawn me here, indeed, at this time.
 265 You may be sure by this branch that I bear here
 That I pass here in peace and no peril seek,
 For had I fared here with a force for fighting ready,
 I have a mail coat at home and a helmet too,
 A shield and a sharp spear, shining bright,
 270 And other weapons to wield I know well also;
 But since I want no war, my weeds are softer.
 But if thou be as bold as all battlers tell,
 Thou will grant me goodly the game that I ask,
 By right."
 275 Arthur gave answer
 And said, "Sir courteous knight,
 If thou crave battle of armor bare,
 Here failest thou not to fight."

 "Nay, I seek no fight, in faith I thee tell.
 280 Here about on this bench are but beardless children.
 If I were harnessed in armor on a high steed
 Here is no man to match me, their mights are so weak.
 Therefore I crave in this court a Christmas game,
 For it is Yule and New Year and here are youths many.
 285 If any so hardy in this house holds himself,
 Or is so bold in his blood, brain-mad in his head
 That dare stiffly strike one stroke for another
 I shall give him of my gift this great battle-ax,

290 Pis ax, þat is heué innogh, to hondele as hym lykes,
 And I schal bide þe fyrst bur as bare as I sitte.
 If any freke be so felle to fonde þat I telle
 Lepe lyztly me to, and lach þis weppen;
 I quit-clayme hit for euer, kepe hit as his auen,
 And I schal stonde hym a strok, stif on þis flet,
 295 Ellez þou wyl dīzt me þe dom to dele hym an oper
 barlay—
 And zet gif hym respite,
 A twelmonyth and a day.
 Now hyze, and let se tite
 300 Dar any herinne ozt say.”

 If he hem stowned vpon fyrst, stiller were þanne
 Alle þe heredmen in halle, þe hyz and þe loze.
 Þe renk on his rouncé hym ruced in his sadel,
 And runischly his rede yzen he reled aboute,
 305 Bende his bresed brozeȝ, blycande grene,
 Wayued his berde for to wayte quo-so wolde ryse.
 When non wolde kepe hym with carp he cozed ful hyze,
 Ande rimed hym ful richly, and ryzt hym to speke.
 “What? Is þis Arthures hous,” quop þe hāpel þenne,
 310 “Þat al þe rous rennes of þurȝ ryalmes so mony?
 Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,
 Your gryndellayk and your greme, and your grete wordes?
 Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Rounde Table
 Ouerwalt wyth a worde of on wyȝes speche,
 315 For al dares for drede withoute dynt schewed!”
 Wyth þis he lazes so loude þat þe lorde greued;

290 This ax, that is heavy enough, to handle as he pleases,
And I shall abide the first blow as bare as I sit.
If any fighter be so fierce to test what I tell
Leap lightly to me and lay hold of this weapon;
I quit-claim it forever; let him keep it as his own,
And I shall stand one stroke from him, stout on this floor,
295 If thou will grant me the right to render him another.
—Time out today!—
And yet I give him respite,
A twelvemonth and a day.
Now hurry and let's see aright
300 If any dare anything say."

If he astounded them at first, stiller were then
All the courtiers in the hall, the high and the low;
The rider on his mount moved him in his saddle
And roughly his red eyes he rolled about,
305 Bent his bushy brows brightly green,
Waved his beard to see whoever would arise.
When none kept him there with talk, he coughed "ahem,"
And rose up full lordly and readied himself to speak.
"What? Is this Arthur's house" quoth the horseman then,
310 "That all the renown runs through realms so many?
Where is now your vainglory and your victories,
Your ferocity and your grimness and your great words?
Now is the revel and renown of the Round Table
Overthrown by one word of one warrior's speech,
315 For all dither for dread without deed shown!"
With this he laughs so loud that the lord grieved.

þe blod schot for scham into his schyre face
 and lere;
 He wex as wroth as wynde,
 320 So did alle þat þer were.
 þe kyng as kene bi kynde
 þen stod þat stif mon nere,

 Ande sayde, "Hapel, by heuen, þyn askyng is nys,
 And as þou foly hatȝ frayst, fynde þe behoues.
 325 I know no gome þat is gast of þy grete wordes.
 Gif me now þy geserne, vpon Godeȝ halue,
 And I schal bayþen þy bone þat þou boden habbes."
 Lyztly lepez he hym to, and laȝt at his honde,
 þen feersly þat oper freke vpon fote lyztis.
 330 Now hatȝ Arthure his axe, and þe halme grypez,
 And sturnely stureȝ hit aboute, þat stryke wyth hit þoȝt;
 þe stif mon hym bifore stod vpon hyȝt,
 Herre þen ani in þe hous by þe hede and more.
 Wyth sturne schere þer he stod he stroked his berde,
 335 And wyth a countenaunce dryȝe he droȝ doun his cote,
 No more mate ne dismayd for hys mayn dintez
 þen any burne vpon bench hade broȝt hym to drynk
 of wyne.
 Gawan, þat sate bi þe quene,
 340 To þe kyng he can encline:
 "I beseche now with saȝez sene
 þis melly mot be myne.

 "Wolde ȝe, worþilych lorde," quop Wawan to þe kyng,
 "Bid me boȝe fro þis benche, and stonde by yow þere,

The blood shot for shame in his shining white face

So fair;

He waxed as wroth as wind,

320 So did all that were there.

The king, as keen by kind

Then strode that stout man nearer,

And said "Horseman, by heaven, thine asking is foolish,

And as thou folly hast sought, to find it thee behooves.

325 I know no gallant that is aghast of thy great words.

Give me now thy great ax, by God's wounds,

And I shall bestow the boon that thou hast begged."

Lightly leaps he him to and latches it from his hand

Then fiercely that other fighter upon foot alights.

330 Now has Arthur his ax, and the hilt grips,

And sternly swings it about, and meant to strike with it;

The stout man before him stood up straight,

Higher than any in the house, by the head and more.

With stern stance where he stood he stroked his beard,

335 And with a countenance dry he drew down his coat,

No more moved nor dismayed for his mighty blows

Than if any battler upon bench had brought him a drink

Of wine.

Gawain, that sat by the queen,

340 To the king he did incline:

"I beseech now with plain speech

This melee may be mine.

"Would ye, worthy lord," quoth Wawain to the king,

"Bid me bow from this bench and stand by you there,

345 þat I wythoute vylanye myzt voyde þis table,
 And þat my legge lady lyked not ille,
 I wolde com to your counseyl bifore your cort ryche,
 For me þink hit not semly, as hit is soþ knawen,
 þer such an askyng is heuened so hyze in your sale,
 350 þaz ze zoursel be talenttyf, to take hit to yourseluen,
 Whil mony so bolde yow aboute vpon bench sytten,
 þat vnder heuen I hope non hazerer of wylle,
 Ne better bodyes on bent þer baret is rered.
 I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,
 355 And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe;
 Bot for as much as ze ar myn em I am only to prayse;
 No bounté bot your blod I in my bodé knowe,
 And syþen þis note is so nys þat nozt hit yow falles,
 And I haue frayned hit at yow fyrst, foldez hit to me;
 360 And if I carp not comlyly, let alle þis cort rych
 bout blame."
 Ryche togeder con roun,
 And syþen þay redder alle same:
 To ryd þe kyng wyth croun,
 365 And gif Gawan þe game.

 þen comaunded þe kyng þe knyzt for to ryse,
 And he ful radly vpros, and ruchched hym fayre,
 Kneled down bifore þe kyng, and cachez þat weppen,
 And he luflyly hit hym laft, and lyfte vp his honde,
 370 And gef hym Goddez blessyng, and gladly hym biddes
 þat his hert and his honde schulde hardi be boþe.
 "Kepe þe, cosyn," quop þe kyng, "þat þou on kyrf sette.
 And if þou redez hym ryzt, redly I trowe
 þat þou schal byden þe bur þat he schal bede after."

345 That I without vile manners might vacate this table,
 And providing my liege lady be not ill pleased,
 I would come to your counsel before your rich court,
 For I think it not seemly, as it is sooth known
 That such an asking be heaved up so high in your hall,
 350 Though you yourself be tempted to take it to yourself
 While so many bold about you upon bench sit
 That under heaven I hold none hardier of will,
 Nor better bodies on earth where battle is reared.
 I am the weakest, I know, and of wit feeblest,
 355 And my life would be the least loss, to speak the sooth,
 For only because you are my uncle am I to be praised;
 No goodness but your blood I in my body know,
 And since this business is so foolish, it does not befit you,
 And I have begged it of you first, inflict it on me;
 360 And if I speak not courteously, let all this court rich
 Me blame."
 Rich nobles gathered round
 And they all advised the same:
 To replace the king with crown,
 365 And give Gawain the game.

Then commanded the king the knight for to rise,
 And he full readily uprose and arranged himself fairly,
 Kneeled down before the king and catches that weapon,
 And Arthur lovingly left it to him and lifted up his hands
 370 And gave him God's blessing and gladly him bids
 That his heart and his hands should hardy be both.
 "Take care, kinsman," quoth the king, "that thou cut but once.
 And if thou deal with him rightly, readily I believe
 Thou shalt survive the blow he shall bring there-after."

375 Gawan gotȝ to þe gome with giserne in honde,
 And he baldly hym bydeȝ, he bayst neuer þe helder.
 Pen carppeȝ to Sir Gawan þe knyȝt in þe grene,
 "Refourme we oure forwardes, er we fyrre passe.
 Fyrst I eþe þe, hapel, how þat þou hattes;
 380 Pat þou me telle truly, as I tryst may."
 "In god fayth," quop þe goode knyȝt, "Gawan I hatte,
 Pat bede þe þis buffet, quat-so bifalleȝ after,
 And at þis tyme twelmonyth take at þe an oþer
 Wyth what weppen so þou wylt, and wyth no wyȝ elleȝ
 385 on lyue."
 Pat oþer onswareȝ agayn,
 "Sir Gawan, so mot I þryue,
 As I am ferly fayn
 Þis dint þat þou schal dryue.

 390 "Bigog!" quop þe grene knyȝt, "Sir Gawan, me lykes
 Pat I schal fange at þy fust þat I haf frayst here.
 And þou hatȝ redily rehersed, bi resoun ful trwe,
 Clanly al þe couenaunt þat I þe kynge asked,
 Saf þat þou schal siker me, segge, bi þi trawþe,
 395 Pat þou schal seche me þiself, where-so þou hopes
 I may be funde vpon folde, and foch þe such wages
 As þou deles me to-day bifore þis douþe ryche."
 "Where schulde I wale þe," quop Gauan, "where is þy place?
 I wot neuer where þou wonyes, bi hym þat me wroȝt,
 400 Ne I know not þe, knyȝt, þy cort ne þi name.
 Bot teche me truly þerto, and telle me how þou hattes,
 And I schal ware alle my wyt to wynne me þeder,

375 Gawain goes to the gallant with the great ax in hand,
 And he boldly him abides; he was abashed not at all.
 Then calls out to Sir Gawain the knight in the green,
 "Let us affirm our pledge, ere we further pace.
 First I ask thee, horseman, how thou art called;
 380 That thou tell me truly, so I can trust."
 "In good faith," quoth the good knight, "Gawain I am called,
 Who grants thee this buffet, whatever after befalls,
 And from this time a twelvemonth I will take one from thee,
 With whatever weapon as thou wish and with no other warrior
 385 Alive."
 The other answers again:
 "Sir Gawain, as I may thrive,
 I am greatly glad, certain,
 That thou this blow shalt drive."

 390 "By Gog!" quoth the green knight, "Sir Gawain, I like it
 That I shall feel from your fist, the favor I have asked.
 And thou hast readily rehearsed, by reason full true,
 Completely all the covenant that I of the king asked,
 Save that thou shall assure me, good sir, by thy troth,
 395 That thou shall seek me thyself, wherever thou supposest
 I may be found upon earth, and fetch thee such wages
 As thou dealest to me today before this dear court."
 "Where do I find thee?" quoth Gawain, "where is thy place?
 I am not aware where thou dwellest, by Him that me wrought,
 400 Nor I know not thee, knight, thy court nor thy name.
 But teach me truly and tell me how thou art called,
 And I shall work with all my wit to win my way thither,

And þat I swere þe for soþe, and by my seker trawep."
 "Þat is innogh in Nwe 3er; hit nedes no more,"
 405 Quop þe gome in þe grene to Gawan þe hende.
 "3if I þe telle trwly, quen I þe tape haue
 And þou me smobely hatz smyten, smartly I þe teche
 Of my hous and my home and myn owen nome,
 Pen may þou frayst my fare and forwardez holde;
 410 And if I spende no speche, þenne spedez þou þe
 better,
 For þou may leng in þy londe and layt no fyrre—
 bot slokes!
 Ta now þy grymme tole to þe,
 And let se how þou cnokez."
 415 "Gladly, sir, for soþe,"
 Quop Gawan; his ax he strokes.

 Þe grene knyzt vpon grounde grayþely hym dresses,
 A littel lut with þe hede, þe lere he discouerez;
 His longe louelych lokkez he layd ouer his croun,
 420 Let þe naked nec to þe note schewe.
 Gauan gripped to his ax, and gederes hit on hyzt,
 Þe kay fot on þe folde he before sette,
 Let him doun lyztly lyzt on þe naked,
 Þat þe scharp of þe schalk schyndered þe bones,
 425 And schrank þurȝ þe schyre grece, and schade hit in twynne,
 Þat þe bit of þe broun stel bot on þe grounde.
 Þe fayre hede fro þe halce hit to þe erþe,
 Þat fele hit foyned wyth her fete, þere hit forth roled.
 Þe blod brayd fro þe body, þat blykked on þe grene,
 430 And nawþer faltered ne fel þe freke neuer þe helder,
 Bot styþly he start forth vpon styf schonkes,

And runyschly he razt out, þere as renkkez stoden,
 Lazt to his lufly hed, and lyft hit vp sone;
 And syþen bozeȝ to his blonk, þe brydel he cachcheȝ,
 435 Steppeȝ into stelbawe and strydeȝ alofte,
 And his hede by þe here in his honde haldeȝ,
 And as sadly þe segge hym in his sadel sette
 As non vnhap had hym ayled, þaȝ hedleȝ he were
 in stedde.
 440 He brayde his bulk aboute,
 Pat vgly bodi þat bledde;
 Moni on of hym had doute,
 Bi þat his resounȝ were redde,

 For þe hede in his honde he haldeȝ vp euen,
 445 Toward þe derrest on þe dece he dresseȝ þe face,
 And hit lyfte vp þe yȝe-lyddeȝ and loked ful brode,
 And meled þus much with his muthe, as ȝe may now here:
 “Loke, Gawan, þou be grayþe to go as þou hetteȝ,
 And layte as lelly til þou me, lude, fynde,
 450 As þou hatȝ hette in þis halle, herande þise knyȝtes;
 To þe grene chapel þou chose, I charge þe, to fotte
 Such a dunt as þou hatȝ dalt—disserued þou habbeȝ—
 To be ȝederly ȝolden on Nw ȝeres morn.
 Þe Knyȝt of þe Grene Chapel men knowen me mony;
 455 Forþi me for to fynde if þou fraysteȝ, fayleȝ þou neuer.
 Þerfore com, oþer recreaunt be calde þe behoues.”
 With a runisch rout þe rayneȝ he torneȝ,
 Halled out at þe hal dor, his hed in his hande,
 Pat þe fyr of þe flynt flaze fro fole houes.

And roughly he reached out where riders stood,
 Latched on to his lovely head, and lifted it up soon;
 And then bounded to his bronc, the bridle he catches,
 435 Steps into the stirrups, strides aloft,
 And his head by the hair holds in his hand,
 And as steadily the stalwart sat him in his saddle,
 As if no mishap had ailed him, though headless now
 Instead.
 440 He twisted his trunk about,
 That ugly body that bled;
 Many feared the clout,
 Ere his speech was said,

 For the head in his hand he holds upright,
 445 Toward the dearest on the dais he addresses the face,
 And it lifted up the eye-lids and looked full widely about
 And spoke thus much with its mouth, as you may now hear:
 "Look, Gawain, thou be prepared to go as thou promised,
 And look loyally till thou, liegeman, find me,
 450 As thou hast promised in this hall, in these knights' hearing;
 To the Green Chapel choose the way, I charge thee, to fetch
 Such a dint as thou hast dealt —thou hast deserved it—
 To be promptly yielded on New Year's morn.
 As the Knight of the Green Chapel, men know me many.
 455 Thus me for to find, if thou set forth, failest thou never.
 Therefore come or recreant to be called thee deservest."
 With a rough roar the reins he turns,
 Hurried out at the hall door, his head in his hand,
 That the fire of the flint flew from his foal's hooves.

460 To quat kyth he becom knwe non þere,
Neuer more þen þay wyste from queþen he wat3 wonnen.
What þenne?
þe kyng and Gawen þare
At þat grene þay laze and grenne,
465 3et breued wat3 hit ful bare
A meruayl among þo menne.

þa3 Arþer, þe hende kyng, at hert hade wonder,
He let no semblaunt be sene, bot sayde ful hyze
To þe comlych quene wyth cortays speche,
470 "Dere dame, to-day demay yow neuer;
Wel bycommes such craft vpon Cristmasse,
Laykyng of enterlude3, to laze and to syng,
Among þise kynde caroles of kny3te3 and ladye3.
Neuer þe lece to my mete I may me wel dres,
475 For I haf sen a selly, I may not forsake."
He glent vpon Sir Gawen and gaynly he sayde,
"Now, sir, heng vp þyn ax, þat hat3 inno3 hewen";
And hit wat3 don abof þe dece on doser to henge,
þer alle men for meruayl myzt on hit loke,
480 And bi trwe tytel þerof to telle þe wonder.
þenne þay bo3ed to a borde þise burnes togeder,
þe kyng and þe gode kny3t, and kene men hem serued
Of alle dayntyey3 double, as derrest myzt falle;
Wyth alle maner of mete and mynstralcie boþe,

460 To what country that he came knew none there,
No more than they knew from whence he was come.

What then?

The king and Gawain there
At that green one they laugh and grin,
465 Yet recorded it was with care
As a marvel among those men.

Though Arthur, the elegant king, at heart had wonder,
He let no sign be seen, but said full high
To the comely queen with courteous speech,
470 "Dear dame, today dismay you never;
Well becomes such craft upon Christmas,
Playing of interludes to laugh and to sing,
Among these courtly carols of knights and ladies.
Nonetheless to my meal I may me well address,
475 For I have seen a strange sight; I can not gainsay it."
He glanced at Sir Gawain and goodly he said,
"Now sir, hang up thine ax, that has enough hewed";
And it was done, above the dais on the tapestry hanging,
Where all men for a marvel might look on it
480 And be truly entitled there-of to tell the wonder.
Then they bounded to the board, these battlers together,
The king and the good knight, and keen men them served
With all dainties double, as to the dearest should befall;
With all manner of meat and minstrelsy both,

485 Wyth wele walt þe day, til worþed an ende
 in londe.
 Now þenk wel, Sir Gawan,
 For woþe þat þou ne wonde
 Þis auenture for to frayn
490 Þat þou hatz tan on honde.

485 With wealth dwelt they that day, until it went to an end
 In land.
 Now, think well, Sir Gawain,
 Lest for fear of what thou began,
 Thou from this adventure refrain
490 That thou hast taken in hand.

This gift has Arthur of adventures at first
 In the young year, for he yearned to hear challenges.
 Though words were wanting when they went to sit,
 Now are they stocked with stern work, stuffed full their hands.
 495 Gawain was glad to begin those games in hall,
 But though the end be heavy, have ye no wonder;
 For though men are merry when they drink much,
 A year runs full swiftly, and yields never the same;
 The first part with the finish fits full seldom.
 500 Thus this Yule passed by, and the year after,
 And each season separately ensued after other:
 After Christmas came the crabbed Lent,
 That tests the flesh with fish and food more simple;
 But then the weather of the world wrangles with winter;
 505 Cold clings down, clouds uplift,
 Shining sheds the rain in showers full warm,
 Falls upon fair fields; flowers there show.
 In both ground and the groves green are their weeds;
 Birds bustle to build, and beautifully sing
 510 For solace of the soft summer that ensues there-after
 With thanks;
 And blossoms begin to swell
 By hedge-rows rich and rank,
 Then noble notes in the dell
 515 Are heard in brush and banks.

After the season of summer with the soft winds
 When Zephyrus settles himself on seeds and herbs,
 Very well is the worthy plant that waxes there-about,
 When the drenching dew drops from the leaves,

520 To bide a blysfyl blusch of þe bryzt sunne.
 Bot þen hyzes Heruest, and hardenes hym sone,
 Warnez hym for þe wynter to wax ful rype;
 He dryues wyth drozt þe dust for to ryse,
 Fro þe face of þe folde to flyze ful hyze;
 525 Wroþe wynde of þe welkyn wrastelez with þe sunne,
 Þe leuez lancen fro þe lynde and lyzten on þe grounde,
 And al grayes þe gres þat grene wat3 ere;
 Penne al rype3 and rote3 þat ros vpon fyrst,
 And þus 3erne3 þe 3ere in 3isterdayez mony,
 530 And wynter wynde3 azayn, as þe worlde askez,
 no fage,
 Til Mezelmas mone
 Wat3 cumen wyth wynter wage;
 Þen þenkke Gawan ful sone
 535 Of his anious uyage.

3et quyl Al-Hal-Day with Arþer he lenges;
 And he made a fare on þat fest for þe frekez sake,
 With much reuel and ryche of þe Rounde Table.
 Knyzte3 ful cortays and comlych ladies
 540 Al for luf of þat lede in longynge þay were,
 Bot neuer þe lece ne þe later þay neuened bot merþe.
 Mony ioyle3 for þat ientyle iape3 þer maden.
 For aftter mete with mournyng he mele3 to his eme,
 And spekez of his passage, and pertly he sayde,
 545 "Now, lege lorde of my lyf, leue I yow ask;
 3e knowe þe cost of þis cace, kepe I no more;
 To telle yow tene3 þerof neuer bot trifel;
 Bot I am boun to þe bur barely to-morne
 To sech þe gome of þe grene, as God wyl me wysse."

520 To abide a blissful blush of the bright sun.
But then hurries in Harvest, and hardens him soon,
Warns him for the winter to wax full ripe;
He drives with drought the dust for to rise,
From the face of the field to fly full high;
525 Wrathful wind of the heavens wrestles with the sun,
The leaves launch from the limbs and alight on the ground,
And all grays the grass that green was before;
Then all ripens and rots that arose at first,
And thus yields the year in yesterdays many,
530 And winter winds back again, as the world asks
For its age,
Until Michaelmas moon
Was come with winter's wage;
Then thinks Gawain full soon
535 Of his anxious voyage.

Yet until All Saints' Day with Arthur he lingers;
And he made a festival and a feast for the fighter's sake,
With much revel and richness of the Round Table.
Knights full courteous and comely ladies
540 All for love of that lad in longing they were,
But never the less nor the latter they spoke only of mirth.
Many joyless for that gentle one jests there made.
At after-meal with mourning he communes with his uncle,
And speaks of his passage, and plainly he said,
545 "Now, liege lord of my life, leave I ask you;
Ye know the cost of this case, care I no more;
To tell you troubles there-of is nothing but trifle;
But I am bound to go for the blow on tomorrow
To seek the gallant of the green, as God will me guide."

550 Penne þe best of þe burȝ boȝed toȝeder,
 Aywan, and Errik, and oþer ful mony,
 Sir Doddinaual de Sauage, þe duk of Clarence,
 Launcelot, and Lyonel, and Lucan þe gode,
 Sir Boos, and Sir Byduer, big men boþe,
 555 And mony oþer menskful, with Mador de la Port.
 Alle þis compayny of court com þe kyng nerre
 For to counseyl þe knyȝt, with care at her hert.
 Pere watȝ much derue doel driuen in þe sale
 þat so worthé as Wawan schulde wende on þat ernde,
 560 To dryȝe a delful dynt, and dele no more
 wyth bronde.
 þe knyȝt mad ay god chere,
 And sayde, "Quat schuld I wonde?
 Of destinés derf and dere
 565 What may mon do bot fonde?"

He dowelleȝ þer al þat day, and dresseȝ on þe morn,
 Askeȝ erly hys armeȝ, and alle were þay bryȝt.
 Fyrst a tulé tapit tyȝt ouer þe flet,
 And miche watȝ þe gyld gere þat glent þeralofte;
 570 þe stif mon steppeȝ þeron, and þe stel hondeleȝ,
 Dubbed in a dublet of a dere tars,
 And syþen a crafty capados, closed aloft,
 þat wyth a bryȝt blaunner was bounden withinne.
 Penne set þay þe sabatounȝ vpon þe segge foteȝ,
 575 His legeȝ lapped in stel with luflych greueȝ,
 With polayneȝ piched þerto, policed ful clene,
 Aboute his kneȝ knaged wyth knoteȝ of golde;
 Queme quyssewes þen, þat coyntlych closed
 His thik þrawen þyȝeȝ with þwonges to tachched;

550 Then the best of the burg banded together:
Ywain and Eric, and others full many,
Sir Dodinal de Savage, the duke of Clarence,
Launcelot and Lionel, and Lucan the good,
Sir Bors and Sir Bedivere, big men both,
555 And many other men of worth, with Mador de la Port.
All the company of court came to the king nearer
For to counsel the knight, with care at their hearts.
There was much secret sadness suffered in the hall
That one so worthy as Wawain should wend on that errand,
560 To endure a doleful dint, and deal blows no more
But die.
The knight made ever good cheer,
And said, "Why should I fly?
Of destinies dreary or dear
565 What can man do but try?"

He dwells there all that day, and dresses on the morn,
Asks early his arms, and they were all brought.
First a red silk tapestry spread tight on the floor,
And much was the gilded gear that gleamed there-on;
570 The stout man steps upon it, and the steel handles,
Adorned in a doublet of a dear Turkish silk,
And next a clever leather cape, closed at the throat,
That with bright white ermine was bound within.
Then set they the steel shoes upon the stalwart's feet,
575 His legs lapped in steel with lovely armor,
With knee-plates placed there-to, polished full bright,
About his knees knitted with knots of gold;
Clear plate then, that cleverly enclosed
His thick sinewed thighs, with thongs attached;

580 And syþen þe brawden bryné of bryzt stel rynges
 Vmbeweued þat wyȝ vpon wlonk stuffe,
 And wel bornyst brace vpon his boþe armes,
 With gode cowters and gay, and glouez of plate,
 And alle þe godlych gere þat hym gayn schulde
 585 þat tyde;
 Wyth ryche cote-armure,
 His gold spore spend with pryde,
 Gurde wyth a bront ful sure
 With silk sayn vmbe his syde.

590 When he watȝ hasped in armes, his harnays watȝ ryche:
 Þe lest lachet ouer loupe lemed of golde.
 So harnayst as he watȝ he herknez his masse,
 Offred and honoured at þe heȝe auter.
 Syþen he comeȝ to þe kyng and to his cort-fereȝ,
 595 Lacheȝ lufly his leue at lordeȝ and ladyeȝ;
 And þay hym kyst and conueyed, bikende hym to Kryst.
 Bi þat watȝ Gryngolet grayth, and gurde with a sadel
 Þat glemed ful gayly with mony golde frenges,
 Ayquere naylet ful nwe, for þat note ryched;
 600 Þe brydel barred aboute, with bryzt golde bounden;
 Þe apparayl of þe payttrure and of þe proude skyrteȝ,
 Þe cropore and þe couertor, acorded wyth þe arsouneȝ;
 And al watȝ rayled on red ryche golde nayleȝ,
 Þat al glytered and glent as glem of þe sunne.
 605 Penne hentes he þe helme, and hastily hit kysses,
 Þat watȝ stapled stifly, and stoffed wythinne.
 Hit watȝ hyȝe on his hede, hasped bihynde,
 Wyth a lyȝtly vrysoun ouer þe auentayle,
 Enbrawden and bounden wyth þe best gemmeȝ

580 And next the braided mail shirt of bright steel rings
 Enclosed that warrior and his costly clothes,
 And well burnished bracers on both his arms,
 With good elbow-guards and gay, and gloves of steel,
 And all the goodly gear that should be gainful to him,
 585 At that tide;
 With rich coat of arms
 His gold spurs affixed with pride,
 Girt with a sword full sure,
 With silken sash round his side.

590 When he was clasped in armor, his harness was rich:
 The least lacing or loop gleamed of gold.
 So, harnessed as he was, he hears his mass,
 Offered and honored at the high altar.
 Then he comes to the king and to his court-fellows,
 595 Takes lovingly his leave from lords and ladies;
 And they kissed and departed, entrusting him to Christ.
 By then was Gringolet ready, and girt with a saddle
 That gleamed full gaily with many gold fringes,
 Everywhere riveted full new, ready for that work;
 600 The bridle with bars about, with bright gold bound;
 The apparel of the trappings and of its proud skirts,
 The crupper and the covering accord with the saddle-bows;
 And all was arrayed on rich red gold studs,
 That all glittered and glowed as gleam of the sun.
 605 Then takes he the helmet, and hastily it kisses,
 That was stapled securely, and stuffed with padding.
 It was high on his head, held by a hasp behind,
 With a light silk band over the neck piece,
 Embroidered and bedecked with the best gems

610 On brode sylkyn borde, and bryddez on semez,
As papiayez paynted peruyng bitwene,
Tortors and trulofez entayled so þyk
As mony burde þeraboute had ben seuen wynter
in toune.

615 Þe cercle watz more o prys
þat vmbeclypped hys croun,
Of diamauntez a deuis
þat boþe were bryzt and broun.

Then þay schewed hym þe schelde, þat was of schyr goulez
620 Wyth þe pentangel depaynt of pure golde hwez.
He braydez hit by þe bauderyk, aboute þe hals kestes;
þat bisemed þe segge semlyly fayre.

And quy þe pentangel apendez to þat prynce noble
I am in tent yow to telle, þof tary hyt me schulde:

625 Hit is a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle
In bytoknyng of trawþe, bi tytly þat hit habbez,
For hit is a figure þat haldez fyue poyntez,
And vche lyne vmbelappez and loukez in oþer,
And ayquere hit is endelez; and Englych hit callen

630 Oueral, as I here, þe endeles knot.
Forþy hit acordez to þis knyzt and to his cler armez,
For ay faythful in fyue and sere fyue syþez:
Gawan watz for gode knawen, and as golde pured,
Voyded of vche vylany, wyth vertuez ennourned

635 in mote;
Forþy þe pentangel nwe
He ber in schelde and cote,
As tulk of tale most trwe
And gentylest knyzt of lote.

610 On broad silken borders, and birds on the seams,
Such as parrots painted preening there-about,
Turtle-doves and true-love knots portrayed so thick
As if many maids there-upon had worked seven winters
In town.

615 The circlet was worth more,
That enclasped his crown,
For diamonds by the score
Shone brightly all around.

Then they showed him the shield, that was of shining red
620 With the pentangle depicted in pure gold hues.
He seizes it by the baldric, about the neck casts;
That well suits the stalwart so seemly fair.
And why the pentangle pertains to that noble prince
I intend you to tell, though tarry me it should:

625 It is a sign that Solomon set some time ago
In betokening of troth, that it truly has,
For it is a figure that holds five points,
And each line embraces and locks in the other,
And everywhere it is endless; and the English call it
630 All over, as I hear, the endless knot.

Therefore it accords to this knight and to his bright arms,
For ever faithful in five ways and five times in each way:
Gawain was for good known, and as gold purified,
Devoid of each villainy, with virtues endowed

635 And devoted;
Therefore the pentangle new
He bore on shield and coat,
As man of tale most true
And gentlest knight of note.

640 Fyrst he wat3 funden fautlez in his fyue wyttez,
 And efte fayled neuer þe freke in his fyue fyngres,
 And alle his afaunce vpon folde wat3 in þe fyue woundez
 þat Cryst kagt on þe croys, as þe Crede tellez;
 And quere-so-euer þys mon in melly wat3 stad,
 645 His þro þo3t wat3 in þat, þur3 alle oþer þyngez,
 þat alle his forsnes he feng at þe Fyue Joyez
 þat þe hende heuen-quene had of hir chylde;
 At þis cause þe knyzt comlyche hade
 In þe inore half of his schelde hir ymage depaynted,
 650 þat quen he blusched þerto his belde neuer payred.
 þe fyft fyue þat I finde þat þe frek vsed
 Wat3 fraunchyse and felazschyp forbe al þyng,
 His clannes and his cortaysye croked were neuer,
 And pité, þat passez alle poyntez, þyse pure fyue
 655 Were harder happed on þat habel þen on any oþer.
 Now alle þese fyue syþez, for soþe, were fetled on þis knyzt,
 And vchone halched in oþer, þat non ende hade,
 And fyched vpon fyue poyntez, þat fayld neuer,
 Ne samned neuer in no syde, ne sundred nouþer,
 660 Withouten ende at any noke I oquere fynde,
 Whereeuer þe gomen bygan, or glod to an ende.
 Perfore on his schene schelde schapen wat3 þe knot
 Ryally wyth red golde vpon rede gowlez,
 þat is þe pure pentaungel wyth þe peple called
 665 with lore.
 Now grayped is Gawan gay,
 And la3t his launce ryzt þore,
 And gef hem alle goud day—
 He wende for euermore.

640 First he was found faultless in his five wits,
 And also failed never the fighter in his five fingers,
 And all his faith in the field was in the five wounds
 That Christ caught on the cross, as the Creed tells;
 And where-so-ever this man in melee took a stand,
 645 His steadfast thought was in that, over all other things,
 That all his courage he took from the Five Joys
 That the courteous heaven-queen had of her child;
 For this cause the comely knight had
 On the inside of his shield her image depicted,
 650 That when he looked there-to he never lacked boldness.
 The fifth five that I find that the fighter used
 Was generosity and fellowship before all things,
 His purity and his courtesy crooked were never,
 And pity, that passes all points; these pure five
 655 Were more heartily heaped on that horseman than any other.
 Now all these five fives, forsooth, were fixed on this knight,
 And each one woven into other, so that no end it had,
 And fixed upon five points, that failed never,
 Not assembled ever on one side, nor separated neither,
 660 Without end at any angle anywhere, I find,
 Wherever the game began, or had gone to an end.
 Therefore on his shining shield shaped was the knot
 Royally with bright gold upon a red background,
 That is the pure pentangle by the people called
 665 With lore.
 Now gracefully Gawain gay
 Latched on to his lance for war,
 And gave them all good day—
 He thought for evermore.

670 He sperred þe sted with þe spureȝ and sprong on his way,
 So stif þat þe ston-fyr stroke out þerafter.
 Al þat seȝ þat semly syked in hert,
 And sayde soþly al same segges til oþer,
 Carande for þat comly: "Bi Kryst, hit is scape
 675 þat þou, leude, schal be lost, þat art of lyf noble!
 To fynde hys fere vpon folde, in fayth, is not eþe.
 Warloker to haf wroȝt had more wyt bene,
 And haf dyȝt ȝonder dere a duk to haue worþed;
 A lowande leder of ledeȝ in londe hym wel semeȝ,
 680 And so had better haf ben þen britned to noȝt,
 Hadet wyth an aluisch mon, for angardeȝ pryde.
 Who knew euer any kyng such counsel to take
 As knyȝtes in cauelaciounȝ on Crystmasse gomneȝ?"
 Wel much watȝ þe warme water þat waltered of yȝen,
 685 When þat semly syre soȝt fro þo woneȝ
 þad daye.
 He made non abode,
 Bot wyȝtly went hys way;
 Mony wylsum way he rode,
 690 þe bok as I herde say.

 Now rideȝ þis renk þurȝ þe ryalme of Logres,
 Sir Gauan, on Godeȝ halue, þaȝ hym no gomen þoȝt.
 Oft leudleȝ alone he lengeȝ on nyȝteȝ
 þer he fonde noȝt hym byfore þe fare þat he lyked.
 695 Hade he no fere bot his fole bi frytheȝ and douneȝ,
 Ne no gome bot God bi gate wyth to karp,
 Til þat he neȝed ful neȝe into þe Norþe Waleȝ.
 Alle þe iles of Anglesay on lyft half he haldeȝ,

670 He spurred the steed with the spurs and sprang on his way,
 So strong that the stone-fire struck out there-after.
 All that saw that seemly sighed in heart,
 And soothly all the same said stalwarts to each other,
 Caring for that comely: "By Christ, it is a calamity
 675 That thou, liegeman, shall be lost, that art of life noble!
 To find his fellow upon field, in faith, is not easy.
 More warily to have worked had been more wise,
 And to have designated yonder dear a duke to have become;
 An illustrious leader of lads in land could well be,
 680 And had better have been that than battered to nothing,
 Beheaded by a monstrous man, for arrogant pride.
 Who knew ever any king such counsel to take
 As from knights quibbling about Christmas games?"
 Well much was the warm water that weltered from eyes,
 685 When that seemly sire set out from those dwellings
 That day.
 He turned to the road,
 And stoutly went his way;
 Many bewildering routes he rode,
 690 The book as I heard say.

 Now rides this rider through the realm of Logres,
 Sir Gawain, by God's wounds, though no game it seemed.
 Oft friendless alone he lingers by night
 Where he found not before him the fare that he liked.
 695 Had he no friend but his foal by forests and downs,
 Nor no gallant but God to speak with by the way,
 Till that he nighed full nigh into the North Wales.
 All the isles of Anglesey on left side he holds,

And fareȝ ouer þe fordeȝ by þe forlondeȝ,
 700 Ouer at þe Holy Hede, til he hade eft bonk
 In þe wyldrenesse of Wyrle; wonde þer bot lyte
 þat auþer God oþer gome wyth goud hert louied.
 And ay he frayned, as he ferde, at frekeȝ þat he met,
 If þay hade herde any karp of a knyȝt grene,
 705 In any grounde þerabout, of þe Grene Chapel;
 And al nykked hym wyth "nay," þat neuer in her lyue
 þay seȝe neuer no segge þat watȝ of suche hweȝ
 of grene.
 þe knyȝt tok gates straunge
 710 In mony a bonk vnbene;
 His cher ful oft con chaunge
 þat chapel er he myȝt sene.

 Mony klyf he ouerclambe in contrayeȝ straunge,
 Fer floten fro his frendeȝ fremedly he rydeȝ.
 715 At vche warpe oþer water þer þe wȝye passed
 He fonde a foo hym byfore—bot ferly hit were—
 And þat so foule and so felle þat feȝt hym byhode.
 So mony meruayl bi mount þer þe mon fyndeȝ,
 Hit were to tore for to telle of þe tenþe dole.
 720 Sumwhyle wyth wormeȝ he werreȝ, and with wolues als,
 Sumwhyle wyth wodwos, þat woned in þe knarreȝ,
 Boþe wyth bulleȝ and bereȝ, and boreȝ oþerquyle,
 And etayneȝ, þat hym aneled, of þe heȝe felle;
 Nade he ben dugty and dryȝe, and Dryȝtyn had serued,
 725 Douteles he hade ben ded and dreped ful ofte.
 For werre wrathed hym not so much þat wynter nas wors,
 When þe colde cler water fro þe cloudeȝ schadde,
 And fres er hit falle myȝt to þe fale erpe;

And fares over the fords by the forelands,
 700 Over by the Holyhead, until he again had the shore
 In the wilderness of Wirral; dwelt there but few
 That neither God nor man with good heart loved.
 And ever he asked, as he fared, from folk that he met,
 If they had heard any talk of a green knight,
 705 On any ground there-about, or of a Green Chapel;
 And all denied it with "nay," that never in their lives
 They ever saw any stalwart that was of such hues
 Of green.
 The knight took ways strange
 710 In many a bank between;
 His mood full oft did change
 Ere that chapel might be seen.

 Many a cliff he overclimbed in countries strange,
 Far flown from his friends as a foreigner he rides.
 715 At each shore or water where the warrior passed
 He found a foe before him— else a wonder it was—
 And that so foul and so fierce that to fight him behooved.
 So many marvels by mountains there the man finds,
 It were too toilsome for to tell of the tenth part.
 720 Sometimes with dragons he wars, and with wolves also,
 Sometimes with wild men, that dwelt in the woods,
 Both with bulls and bears, and boars at other times,
 And ogres, that him annoyed from the high rocks;
 Were he not doughty and enduring, and the dear Lord served,
 725 Doubtless he had been dead and done for full oft.
 For war worried him not so much; that winter was worse,
 When the cold clear water from the clouds shed,
 And froze ere it fall might to the faded earth;

Ner slayn wyth þe slete he sleped in his yrnas
 730 Mo nyzteþ þen innoze in naked rokkez,
 Per as claterande fro þe crest þe colde borne rennez,
 And henged hege ouer his hede in hard iisse-ikkles.
 Pus in peryl and payne and plytes ful harde
 Bi contray cayrez þis knyzt, tyl Krystmasse euen,
 735 al one;
 Þe knyzt wel þat tyde
 To Mary made his mone,
 Þat ho hym red to ryde
 And wysse hym to sum wone.

 740 Bi a mounte on þe morne meryly he rydes
 Into a forest ful dep, þat ferly watȝ wylde,
 Hize hilleȝ on vche a halue, and holtwodeȝ vnder
 Of hore okeȝ ful hoge a hundreth togeder;
 Þe hasel and þe hazborne were harled al samen,
 745 With roze raged mosse rayled aywhere,
 With mony bryddeȝ vnþyþe vpon bare twyges,
 Þat pitosly þer piped for pyne of þe colde.
 Þe gome vpon Gryngolet glydeȝ hem vnder,
 Þurȝ mony misy and myre, mon al hym one,
 750 Carande for his costes, lest he ne keuer schulde
 To se þe seruyse of þat Syre, þat on þat self nyzt
 Of a burde watȝ borne oure baret to quelle;
 And þerfore sykyng he sayde, "I beseche þe, Lorde,
 And Mary, þat is myldest moder so dere,
 755 Of sum herber þer heȝly I myzt here masse,
 Ande þy matyneȝ tomorne, mekely I ask,

Nearly slain with the sleet he slept in his iron armor
 730 More nights than enough in naked rocks,
 Where clattering from the crest the cold brook runs,
 And hanged high over his head in hard icicles.
 Thus in peril and pain and plights full hard
 Through the country comes this knight, til Christmas eve,
 735 Alone;
 The knight well that tide
 To Mary made his moan,
 That she reveal where to ride
 That some dwelling him be shown.

740 By a mount on the morn merrily he rides
 Into a forest full deep, that was fabulously wild,
 Tall hills on each side, and high woods as well
 Of hoar oaks full huge, a hundred in all;
 The hazel and the hawthorn were tangled all together,
 745 With rough ragged moss arrayed everywhere,
 With many birds unblithe upon bare twigs,
 That piteously there piped for pain of the cold.
 The gallant upon Gringolet galloped them under,
 Through many a morass and mire, a man all alone,
 750 Caring for his duties, lest he should not come
 To see the service of that Sire that on that same night
 Of a maiden was born our troubles to abate;
 And there-for sighing he said, "I beseech thee, Lord,
 And Mary, that is mildest mother so dear,
 755 For some harborage where holily I might hear mass,
 And thy matins in the morning, meekly I ask,

And þerto prestly I pray my Pater and Aue
and Crede."

760 He rode in his prayere,
And cryed for his mysdede;
He sayned hym in syþes sere,
And sayde "Cros Kryst me spede!"

Nade he sayned hymself, segge, bot þrye,
Er he watȝ war in þe wod of a won in a mote,
765 Abof a launde, on a lawe, loken vnder boȝez
Of mony borelych bole aboute bi þe diches:
A castel þe comlokest þat euer knyȝt aȝte,
Pyched on a prayere, a park al aboute,
With a pyked palays pyned ful þik,
770 þat vmbeteȝe mony tre mo þen two myle.
þat holde on þat on syde þe hapel auysed,
As hit schemered and schon þurȝ þe schyre okeȝ;
þenne hatȝ he hendly of his helme, and heȝly he þonkeȝ
Jesus and Sayn Gilyan, þat gentyle ar boþe,
775 þat cortaysly had hym kydde, and his cry herkened.
"Now bone hostel," coþe þe burne, "I beseche yow ȝette!"
þenne gerdeȝ he to Gryngolet with þe gilt heleȝ,
And he ful chauncely hatȝ chosen to þe cheȝ gate,
þat broȝt bremlȝ þe burne to þe bryȝe ende
780 in haste.
þe bryȝe watȝ breme vpbrayde,
þe ȝateȝ wer stoken faste.
þe walleȝ were wel arayed,
Hit dut no wyndeȝ blaste.

And there-to promptly I pray my 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary'
And 'Creed.'"

760 He rode in his prayer,
And cried for his misdeed;
He signed himself repeatedly there,
And said "Cross of Christ me lead!"

He had not signed himself, that stalwart, but thrice,
Ere he was aware in the wood of a dwelling within a moat,
765 Above an open lawn, on a low hill, locked under boughs
By many burly branches about by the ditches:
A castle the comeliest that ever knight commanded,
Placed on an open meadow, a park all around,
With a spiked palisade penned in full thick,
770 That enclosed many trees more than two miles.
That hold on that one side the horseman observed,
As it shimmered and shone through sheltering oaks;
Then courteously he doffs his helmet, and holily he thanks
Jesus and Saint Julian, that gentle are both,
775 Who courteously recognized him, and his cry hearkened.
"Now for good lodging," quoth the brave, "I beseech you yet!"
Then he gives spur to Gringolet with the gilded heels,
And he fully by chance has chosen the chief path,
That quickly brought the brave to the bridge's end
780 In haste.
The bridge was firmly raised,
The gates were shut up fast.
The walls were mightily made;
They feared no windy blast.

785 þe burne bode on blonk, þat on bonk houed
 Of þe depe double dich þat drof to þe place;
 þe walle wod in þe water wonderly depe,
 Ande eft a ful huge heȝt hit haled vpon lofte
 Of harde hewen ston vp to þe tableȝ,
 790 Enbaned vnder þe abataylment in þe best lawe;
 And syþen garyteȝ ful gaye gered bitwene,
 Wyth mony luflych loupe þat louked ful clene;
 A better barbican þat burne blusched vpon neuer.
 And innermore he behelde þat halle ful hyȝe,
 795 Towres telded bytwene, trochet ful þik,
 Fayre fylyoleȝ þat fyȝed, and ferlyly long,
 With coruon coprounes craftyly sleȝe.
 Chalkwhyȝt chymnees þer ches he innoȝe
 Vpon bastel roueȝ, þat blenked ful quyte.
 800 So mony pynakle payntet watz poudred ayquere,
 Among þe castel carneleȝ clambred so þik,
 þat pared out of papure purely hit semed.
 þe fre freke on þe fole hit fayr innoȝe þoȝt,
 If he myȝt keuer to com þe cloyster wythinne,
 805 To herber in þat hostel whyȝl halyday lested,
 auinant.
 He calde, and sone þer com
 A porter pure plesaunt,
 On þe wal his ernd he nome
 810 And haylsed þe knyȝt erraunt.

“Gode sir,” quop Gawan, “woldeȝ þou go myn ernde
 To þe heȝ lorde of þis hous, herber to craue?”
 “Ȝe, Peter,” quop þe porter, “and purely I trowee

785 The brave abided on his bronc, that hovered on the bank
 Of the deep double ditch that defended the place;
 The wall went into the water wonderfully deep,
 And then a full huge height it had upon loft
 Of hard hewed stone high up to the cornices
 790 With ledges under the battlements in the best style;
 And then towers full gay placed goodly between
 With many lovely windows that locked completely;
 A better defense that brave looked upon never.
 And further in he beheld that hall full high,
 795 Towers between them, pinnacles full thick,
 Fair spires that befitted them, and fabulously high,
 With curiously carved tops, craftily made.
 Chalk-white chimneys, many choice ones
 On the burg's roofs, that shone bright white.
 800 So many painted pinnacles were put about everywhere,
 About the castle embrasures clustered so thick,
 That pared out of paper surely it seemed.
 The fighter on his foal thought it fair indeed,
 If he could have leave to come the cloister within,
 805 To have harbor in that hostel while the holy days last,
 As at present.
 He called, and soon there came
 A porter purely pleasant,
 On the wall his duty to proclaim
 810 And hail the knight errant.

"Good sir," quoth Gawain, "wouldst thou go my errand
 To the high lord of this house, lodging to crave?"
 "Yea, Peter," quoth the porter, "and surely I suppose

Pat ȝe be, wyȝe, welcum to won quyle yow lykeȝ."
 815 Pen ȝede þe wyȝe ȝerne and com aȝayn swyþe,
 And folke frely hym wyth, to fonge þe knyȝt.
 Pay let doun þe grete draȝt and derely out ȝeden,
 And kneled doun on her knes vpon þe colde erþe
 To welcum þis ilk wyȝ as worþy hom þoȝt;
 820 Pay ȝolden hym þe brode ȝate, ȝarked vp wyde,
 And he hem raysed rekenly, and rod ouer þe brygge.
 Sere seggeȝ hym sesed by sadel, quel he lyȝt,
 And syþen stabeled his stede stif men innoȝe.
 Knyȝteȝ and swyereȝ comen doun þenne
 825 For to bryng þis buerne wyth blys into halle;
 Quen he hef vp his helme, þer hized innoghe
 For to hent hit at his honde, þe hende to seruen;
 His bronde and his blasoun boþe þay token.
 Pen haylsed he ful hendly þo haþeleȝ vchone,
 830 And mony proud mon þer presed þat prynce to honour.
 Alle hasped in his heȝ wede to halle þay hym wonnen,
 Per fayre fyre vpon flet fersly brenned.
 Penne þe lorde of þe lede louteȝ fro his chambre
 For to mete wyth menske þe mon on þe flor;
 835 He sayde, "Ȝe ar welcum to welde as yow lykeȝ
 Pat here is; al is yowre awen, to haue at yowre wyll
 and welde."
 "Graunt mercy," quop Gawayn,
 "Per Kryst hit yow forȝelde."
 840 As frekeȝ þat semed fayn
 Ayþer oþer in armeȝ con felde.

Gawayn glyȝt on þe gome þat godly hym gret,
 And þuȝt hit a bolde burne þat þe burȝ aȝte,

That ye be, warrior, welcome to dwell while you like."
 815 Then went the warrior eagerly and came again quickly,
 And folk courteously with him, to accompany the knight.
 They let down the great draw-bridge and decorously went,
 And kneeled down on their knees upon the cold earth
 To welcome this same warrior as worthy they thought;
 820 They yield to him the broad gate, gaping up wide,
 And he bad them rise readily, and rode over the bridge.
 Several stalwarts held his saddle, while he stepped down,
 And then stabled his steed stout men many.
 Knights and squires came down then
 825 For to bring this brave with bliss into hall;
 When he heaved up his helmet, there hastened many
 For to have it from his hand, the courtier to honor;
 His broad sword and his blazoned shield both they took.
 Then hailed he full courteously those horsemen each one,
 830 And many proud men there pressed in, that prince to honor.
 All harnessed in his high armor to hall they bring him
 Where fair fire upon floor fiercely burned.
 Then the lord of the lads leaves his chamber
 For to meet with good manners the man on the floor;
 835 He said, "Ye are welcome, to wield what you like
 All that is here is your own, to have at your will
 And hold."
 "Great thanks," quoth Gawain,
 "May Christ you uphold."
 840 As fighters that do not feign
 Each other in arms did enfold.

Gawain gazed on the gallant that goodly him greeted,
 And thought it a bold brave that the burg owned,

A hoge hapel for þe noneȝ, and of hyghe eldee;
 845 Brode, bryȝt, watȝ his berde, and al beuer-hwed,
 Sturue, stif on þe strypppe on stalworth schonkeȝ,
 Felle face as þe fyre, and fre of hys speche;
 And wel hym semed, for soþe, as þe segge þuȝt,
 To lede a lortschyp in lee of leudeȝ ful gode.
 850 Þe lorde hym charred to a chambre, and chefly cumaundeȝ
 To delyuer hym a leude, hym loȝly to serue;
 And þere were boun at his bode burneȝ innoȝe,
 Þat broȝt hym to a bryȝt boure, þer beddyng watȝ noble,
 Of cortynes of clene sylk wyth cler golde hemmeȝ,
 855 And couertoreȝ ful curious with comlych paneȝ
 Of bryȝt blaunner aboue, enbrawdred bisydeȝ,
 Rudeleȝ rennande on ropeȝ, red golde ryngȝ,
 Tapiteȝ tyȝt to þe woȝe of Tuly and Tars,
 And vnder fete, on þe flet, of folȝande sute.
 860 Þer he watȝ dispoyled, wyth specheȝ of myerþe,
 Þe burn of his bruny and of his bryȝt wedeȝ.
 Ryche robes ful rad renkkeȝ hym broȝten,
 For to charge, and to chaunge, and chose of þe best.
 Sone as he on hent, and happed þerinne,
 865 Þat sete on hym semly wyth saylande skyrteȝ,
 Þe ver by his uisage verayly hit semed
 Welneȝ to vche hapel, alle on hwes
 Lowande and lufly alle his lymmeȝ vnder,
 Þat a comloker knyȝt neuer Kryst made
 870 hem þoȝt.
 Wheþen in worlde he were,
 Hit semed as he moȝt
 Be prynce withouten pere
 In felde þer felle men foȝt.

A huge horseman for battling, and in his best years;
 845 Broad, bright, was his beard, and all beaver-colored,
 Stern, strong in his stance on stalwart shanks,
 Face fierce as the fire, and fair in his speech;
 And well him suited, for sooth, as the stalwart thought,
 To lead a lordship in a castle of liegemen full good.
 850 The lord conducts him to a chamber, and quickly commands
 To assign him a lad, loyally to serve;
 And there were ready at his bidding many brave knights,
 That brought him to a bright bower, with noble bedding,
 Of curtains of glowing silk with gleaming gold hems,
 855 And covers full curious with comely panels
 Of bright white fur above, embroidered round about,
 Curtains running on ropes, with red gold rings,
 Stretched on the wall tapestries of Toulouse and Turkestan,
 And under foot, on the floor, of a matching form.
 860 There he was disarmed, with speeches of mirth,
 The brave of his mail and of his bright armor.
 Rich robes full readily servants him brought,
 For to choose one, and to change, and rejoice in the best.
 As soon as he has picked one, and is apparelled within
 865 One that sat on him seemly with spreading skirts,
 The verdant Spring by his visage verily it seemed
 Well nigh to each horsemen, for all its hues
 Glowing and lovely, and all his limbs covered,
 That a comelier knight never Christ made,
 870 They thought.
 Wherever in world he were,
 It seemed as if he ought
 Be prince without peer
 In field where fierce men fought.

875 A cheyer byfore þe chemné, þer charcole brenned,
 Watȝ grayþed for Sir Gawan grayþely with cloþez,
 Whyssynes vpon queldepoyntes þat koynt wer boþe;
 And þenne a meré mantyle watȝ on þat mon cast
 Of a broun bleaunt, enbrauded ful ryche
 880 And fayre furred wythinne with felleȝ of þe best,
 Alle of ermyn in erde, his hode of þe same;
 And he sete in þat settel semlych ryche,
 And achaufed hym chefly, and þenne his cher mended.
 Sone watȝ telded vp a tabil on tresteȝ ful fayre,
 885 Clad wyth a clene cloþe þat cler quyt schewed,
 Sanap, and salure, and syluerin sponȝe.
 Þe wyȝe wesche at his wylle, and went to his mete.
 Seggeȝ hym serued semly innoȝe
 Wyth sere sewes and sete, sesounde of þe best.
 890 Double-felde, as hit falleȝ, and fele kyn fischeȝ,
 Summe baken in bred, summe brad on þe gledeȝ,
 Summe soþen, summe in sewe sauered with spyces,
 And ay sawes so sleye þat þe segge lyked.
 Þe freke calde hit a fest ful frely and ofte
 895 Ful hendely, quen alle þe hapeles rehayted hym at oneȝ,
 as hende,
 “Þis penaunce now ȝe take,
 And eft hit schal amende.”
 Þat mon much merþe con make,
 900 For wyn in his hed þat wende.

Þenne watȝ spyed and spured vpon spare wyse
 Bi preué poynteȝ of þat prynce, put to hymselfen,
 þat he beknew cortaysly of þe court þat he were

875 A chair before the chimney, where charcoal burned,
 Was arrayed for Sir Gawain gracefully with cloths,
 Cushions upon quilts that were all cleverly made;
 And then a merry mantle was on that man cast
 Of a bright silk fabric, embroidered full rich
 880 And fair furred within with the finest of pelts,
 All with ermine adorned, his hood of the same;
 And he sat in that seat, sumptuously rich,
 And warmed himself quickly, and then his mood changed.
 Soon was set up a table on trestles full fair,
 885 Clad with a gleaming cloth that clear white shone,
 Place-mats, and saltcellars, and silver spoons.
 The warrior washed, as he wished, and went to his meal.
 Stalwarts him served seemly indeed
 With many excellent stews, seasoned of the best,
 890 Double portions, as was fitting, and fish of many kinds,
 Some baked in bread, some broiled on the coals,
 Some seethed, some in stews savored with spices,
 And always subtle sauces that the stalwart liked.
 The fighter called it a feast full freely and oft
 895 Full courteously, when all the horsemen a reply at once
 Extended:
 "This penance now ye take,
 And soon it shall be amended."
 That man much mirth did make,
 900 For wine in his head that wended.

Then was spied out and asked in subtle ways
 By privy questions of that prince, put to himself,
 That he admitted courteously that he was of the court

That Arthur the elegant holds as his own,
 905 He who is the rich royal king of the Round Table,
 And it was Gawain himself that in that hall sits,
 Come to that Christmas, as the case then befell.
 When the lord had learned that he this liegeman had,
 Loud laughed he there-at, so lovely it seemed to him,
 910 And all the men inside that moat made much joy
 To appear in his presence promptly that time,
 Since all price and prowess and pure manners
 Append to his person, and praised are ever;
 Before all men upon earth his honor is the most.
 915 Each stalwart full softly said to his fellow:
 "Now shall we surely see the skills of good manners
 And the faultless terms of talking noble.
 What success is in speech without asking we can learn,
 Since we have found here that fine father of nurture.
 920 God has given us his grace goodly for sooth,
 Who such a guest as Gawain grants us to have,
 When blithe braves of his birth shall sit
 And sing.
 To understand good manners here
 925 This brave now shall us bring;
 I hold that he who may him hear
 Shall learn of love-talking."

When dinner was done and the dear Gawain up
 It was nigh to that time that night neared.
 930 Chaplains to the chapels chose the direct way,
 Rang full richly, right as they should,
 To the holy Evensong of the high season.

þe lorde loutes þerto, and þe lady als;
 Into a cumly closet coyntly ho entrez.
 935 Gawan glydez ful gay and gos þeder sone;
 þe lorde laches hym by þe lappe and ledez hym to sytte,
 And couply hym knowez and callez hym his nome,
 And sayde he wat3 þe welcomest wy3e of þe worlde;
 And he hym þonkked þroly, and ayþer halched oþer,
 940 And seten soberly samen þe seruise quyle.
 Penne lyst þe lady to loke on þe knyzt,
 Penne com ho of hir closet with mony cler burdez.
 Ho wat3 þe fayrest in felle, of flesche and of lyre,
 And of compas and colour and costes, of alle oþer,
 945 And wener þen Wenore, as þe wy3e þo3t.
 He ches þur3 þe chaunsel to cheryche þat hende.
 An oþer lady hir lad bi þe lyft honde,
 þat wat3 alder þen ho, an auncian hit semed,
 And he3ly honowred with hapelez aboute.
 950 Bot vnlyke on to loke þo ladyes were,
 For if þe 3onge wat3 3ep, 3ol3e wat3 þat oþer;
 Riche red on þat on rayled ayquere,
 Ru3 ronkled chekez þat oþer on rolled;
 Kerhofes of þat on, wyth mony cler perlez,
 955 Hir brest and hir bryzt þrote bare displayed,
 Schon schyrer þen snawe þat schede3 on hillez;
 þat oþer wyth a gorger wat3 gered ouer þe swyre,
 Chymbled ouer hir blake chyn with chalkquyte vayles,
 Hir frount folden in sylk, enfoubled ayquere,
 960 Toreted and treleted with tryfle3 aboute,
 þat no3t wat3 bare of þat burde bot þe blake brozes,
 þe tweyne y3en and þe nase, þe naked lyppez,

The lord leads there-to, and the lady also;
 Into a comely enclosed pew gracefully she enters.
 935 Gawain goes full gay and gets thither soon;
 The lord snatches him by the sleeve and leads him to sit,
 And cordially with him converses and calls him by his name,
 And said he was the welcomest warrior in the world;
 And he him thanked thoroughly, and either hugged the other,
 940 And sat soberly together during the service.
 Then desired the lady to look on the knight,
 Then came she from her enclosed pew with glowing maidens.
 She was the fairest in complexion, of flesh and of skin,
 And of stature and color and customs, compared to all others,
 945 And more lovely than Guenevere, as the warrior thought.
 He chose his way through the sanctuary to salute that lady.
 Another lady her led by the left hand,
 That was older than she, an ancient it seemed,
 And highly honored by horsemen about.
 950 But unlike to look on those ladies were,
 For if the young was fresh, yellowed was that other;
 Rich red on that one arrayed everywhere,
 Rough wrinkled cheeks rolled on that other;
 Kerchiefs on that one, with many clear pearls,
 955 Her breast and her bright throat bare displayed,
 Shone more shining than snow that sheds on hills;
 That other with a collar had covered all her neck,
 Enclosed her black chin with chalk-white veils,
 Her forehead covered and adorned, enfolded everywhere,
 960 Bedecked and tricked out bejeweled all round,
 That nothing was bare of that woman but the black brows,
 The two eyes and the nose, the naked lips,

And þose were soure to se and sellyly blered;
 A mensk lady on molde mon may hir calle,
 965 for Gode!
 Hir body wat3 schort and þik,
 Hir buttokez bal3 and brode;
 More lykkerwys on to lyk
 Wat3 þat scho hade on lode.

 970 When Gawayn glyzt on þat gay, þat graciously loked,
 Wyth leue lazt of þe lorde he lent hem azaynes.
 Þe alder he haylses, heldande ful lowe;
 Þe loueloker he lappez a lyttel in arme3,
 He kysses hir comlyly, and knyztly he mele3.
 975 Þay kallen hym of aquoyntaunce, and he hit quyk askez
 To be her seruaunt sothly, if hemsely lyked.
 Þay tan hym bytwene hem, wyth talkyng hym leden
 To chambre, to chemné, and chefly þay asken
 Spycez, þat vnsparely men speded hom to bryng,
 980 And þe wynnelych wyne þerwith vche tyme.
 Þe lorde luflych aloft lepez ful ofte,
 Mynned merthe to be made vpon mony syþez,
 Hent he3ly of his hode, and on a spere hinged,
 And wayned hom to wynne þe worchip þerof,
 985 Þat most myrþe myzt meue þat Crystenmas whyle;
 "And I schal fonde, bi my fayth, to fylter wyth þe best
 Er me wont þe wede, with help of my frende3."
 Þus wyth lazande lote3 þe lorde hit tayt make3,
 For to glade Sir Gawayn with gomnez in halle
 990 þat nyzt,
 Til þat hit wat3 tyme
 Þe lord comaundet lyzt;

And those were sour to see and exceedingly bleared;
 An honorable lady on earth men may her call,
 965 For God!
 Her body was short and thick,
 Her buttocks big and broad;
 A more luscious one to pick
 Was she with whom she trod.

970 When Gawain glanced on that gay, that graciously looked,
 With leave allowed by the lord the ladies he greets.
 The elder he hails, bowing full low;
 The more lovely he laps a little in arms,
 He kisses her comely, and knightly he speaks.
 975 They request his acquaintance, and he quickly asks
 To be their servant soothly, if they so pleased.
 They take him between them, with talking him lead
 To chamber, to chimney, and cheerfully order
 Spices, that unsparingly men sped them to bring,
 980 And the excellent wine there-with each time.
 The lord lively aloft leaps full oft,
 Commanded mirth to be made many a time,
 Hastily doffed his hood, and on a spear hanged it,
 And waved them to win the worship there-of,
 985 Who most mirth might move that Christmas time;
 "And I shall try, by my faith, to contend with the best
 Lest I lose the hood, with help of my friends."
 Thus with laughing speech the lord makes merry,
 For to gladden Sir Gawain with games in hall
 990 That night,
 Till it was late eve;
 The lord commanded light;

Sir Gawen his leue con nyme
And to his bed hym digt.

- 995 On þe morne, as vch mon mynez þat tyme
 þat Dryȝtyn for oure destyné to deȝe watȝ borne,
 Wele waxeȝ in vche a won in worlde for His sake;
 So did hit þere on þat day þurȝ dayntés mony:
 Boþe at mes and at mele messes ful quaynt
- 1000 Derf men vpon dece drest of þe best.
 þe olde auncian wyf heȝest ho sytteȝ,
 þe lorde lufly her by lent, as I trowe;
 Gawan and þe gay burde togeder þay seten,
 Euen inmyddeȝ, as þe messe metely come,
- 1005 And syþen þurȝ al þe sale as hem best semed;
 Bi vche grome at his degré grayþely watȝ serued
 þer watȝ mete, þer watȝ myrþe, þer watȝ much ioie,
 þat for to telle þerof hit me tene were,
 And to poynte hit zet I pyned me parauenture.
- 1010 Bot zet I wot þat Wawen and þe wale burde
 Such comfort of her compaynye caȝten togeder
 þurȝ her dere dalyaunce of her derne wordeȝ,
 Wyth clene cortays carp closed fro fylþe,
 þat hor play watȝ passande vche prynce gomen,
- 1015 in vayres.
 Trumpeȝ and nakerys,
 Much pypyng þer repayres;
 Vche mon tented hys,
 And þay two tented þayres.
- 1020 Much dut watȝ þer dryuen þat day and þat oþer,
 And þe þryd as þro þronge in þerafter;

Sir Gawain takes his leave,
And then to bed aright.

- 995 On the morn, as each man remembers that time
That Dear God for our destiny to die was born,
Joy waxes in each dwelling in world for His sake;
So did it there on that day through dainties many:
Both at breakfast and at dinner dishes full elaborate;
1000 Doughty men upon dais dined on the best;
The old ancient wife highest she sits,
The lord attentively by her lounged, as I believe;
Gawain and the gay lady together they sat,
Right in the middle, where the meals first come,
1005 And are then served to all, as to them best seemed;
Each good man, by his degree, graciously was served.
There were meals, there was mirth, there was much joy,
That for to tell there-of would be trouble for me,
And to compose it just now pained me indeed.
1010 But yet I know well that Wawain and the winsome lady
Such comfort of their company caught together
Through the dear dalliance of their secret words,
With clean courteous discourse clear from filth,
And their play surpassed each princely game,
1015 And fair.
Trumpets and drummers the best.
Much piping there repairs;
Each man tends his business,
And those two tended theirs.
- 1020 Much delight was there driven that day and the next,
And the third as delightful thrust in there-after;

þe ioye of Sayn Joneȝ Day watȝ gentyle to here,
 And watȝ þe last of þe layk, leudeȝ þer þogten.
 þer wer gestes to go vpon þe gray morne,
 1025 Forþy wonderly þay woke, and þe wyn dronken,
 Daunsed ful drezly wyth dere caroleȝ.
 At þe last, when hit watȝ late, þay lachen her leue,
 Vchon to wende on his way þat watȝ wyȝe stronge.
 Gawan gef hym god day, þe godmon hym lachcheȝ,
 1030 Ledes hym to his awen chambre, þe chymné bysyde,
 And þere he draȝeȝ hym on dryȝe, and derely hym þonkkeȝ
 Of þe wynne worschip þat he hym wayued hade,
 As to honour his hous on þat hyȝe tyde,
 And enbelyse his burȝ with his bele chere:
 1035 "Iwysse sir, quyl I leue, me worþeȝ þe better
 þat Gawayn hatȝ ben my gest at Goddeȝ awen fest."
 "Grant merci, sir," quop Gawayn, "in god fayth hit is yowreȝ,
 Al þe honour is your awen; þe Heȝe Kyng yow zelde!
 And I am wyȝe at your wylle to worch youre hest,
 1040 As I am halden þerto, in hyȝe and in loȝe,
 bi riȝt."
 þe lorde fast can hym payne
 To holde lenger þe knyȝt;
 To hym answareȝ Gawayn
 1045 Bi non way þat he myȝt.

Then frayned þe freke ful fayre at himseluen
 Quat derue dede had hym dryuen at þat dere tyme
 So kenly fro þe kyngeȝ kourt to kayre al his one,
 Er þe halidayeȝ holly were halet out of toun.

The joy of Saint John's Day was gentle to hear,
 And was the last of the feasting, liegemen there thought.
 There were guests to go upon the gray morn,
 1025 Therefore long they stayed awake, and the wine drank,
 Danced all unceasingly with dear carols.
 At the last, when it was late, they took their leave,
 Each one to wend on his way that was a guest warrior.
 Gawain gave him good day, the good man him grabs,
 1030 Leads him to his own chamber, the chimney beside,
 And there he draws him aside, and dearly him thanks
 For the noble worship that he had shown him,
 As to honor his house on that high season,
 And embellish his burg with his buoyant good cheer:
 1035 "Indeed sir, while I live, I will be the better
 That Gawain has been my guest at God's own feast."
 "Great thanks, sir," quoth Gawain, "in good faith it is yours;
 All the honor is your own; may the High King reward you!
 And I am warrior at your will to work your command,
 1040 As I am beholden there-to, in high and in low,
 By right."
 The lord fast did him strain
 To hold longer that knight;
 To him answers Gawain
 1045 That in no way he might.

Then asked the fighter full fair of himself
 What doughty deed had him driven at that dear time
 So keenly from the king's court to canter all alone,
 Ere the holidays wholly were hurried out of town.

- 1050 "For soþe, sir," quop þe segge, "3e sayn bot þe trawþe,
 A heze ernde and a hasty me hade fro þo wonez,
 For I am sumned myselfe to sech to a place,
 I ne wot in worlde whederwarde to wende hit to fynde.
 I nolde bot if I hit negh myzt on Nw 3eres morne
- 1055 For alle þe londe inwyth Logres, so me oure Lorde help!
 Forþy, sir, þis enquest I require yow here,
 Pat 3e me telle with trawþe if euer 3e tale herde
 Of þe Grene Chapel, quere hit on grounde stondez,
 And of þe knyzt þat hit kepes, of colour of grene.
- 1060 Þer wat3 stabled bi statut a steuen vus bytwene
 To mete þat mon at þat mere, 3if I myzt last;
 And of þat ilk Nw 3ere bot neked now wontez,
 And I wolde loke on þat lede, if God me let wolde,
 Gladloker, bi Goddez sun, þen any god welde!
- 1065 Forþi, iwyssse, bi yowre wyllle, wende me bihoues,
 Naf I now to busy bot bare þre dayez,
 And me als fayn to falle feye as fayly of myyn ernde."
 Penne lazande quop þe lorde, "Now leng þe byhoues,
 For I schal teche yow to þat terme bi þe tyme3 ende,
- 1070 Þe Grene Chapayle vpon grounde greue yow no more;
 Bot 3e schal be in yowre bed, burne, at þyn ese;
 Quyle forth dayez, and ferk on þe fyrst of þe 3ere,
 And cum to þat merk at mydmorn, to make quat yow like3
 in spenne;
- 1075 Dowellez whyle New 3eres daye,
 And rys, and raykez þenne.
 Mon schal yow sette in waye;
 Hit is not two myle henne."

1050 "For sooth, sir," quoth the stalwart, "ye say but the truth,
 A high errand and an important haled me from home,
 For I myself am summoned to search for a place,
 I know not in this world which way to wend to find it.
 I want nothing but to be nigh it on New Year's morn.
 1055 For all the land within Logres, so help me Our Lord!
 Therefore, sir, this request I require of you here,
 That ye me tell with truth if ever ye tale heard
 Of the Green Chapel, where it on ground stands,
 And of the knight that it keeps, of color of green.
 1060 There was set by agreement a day we arranged
 To meet that man at that landmark, if I might last;
 And of that same New Year but little now lacks,
 And I would look on that lad, if God would let me,
 More gladly, by God's Son, than any good wield!
 1065 Therefore, indeed, with your permission, to wend me behooves.
 Nor have I now to be busy but bare three days,
 And I as eager to fall dead as fail of mine errand."
 Then laughing quoth the lord, "Now linger thee behooves,
 For I shall teach you to that place by the time's end,
 1070 Let the Green Chapel upon ground grieve you no more;
 And ye shall be in your bed, brave, at thine ease;
 Wile forth the days, and fare on the first of the year,
 And come to that place at midmorning, as you please
 In defense;
 1075 Dwell until New Year's day,
 And rise, and ride thence.
 We shall set you on the way;
 It is not two miles hence."

Penne wat3 Gawan ful glad, and gomenly he lazed:
 1080 "Now I þonk yow þryuandely þur3 alle oþer þynge.
 Now acheued is my chaunce, I schal at your wylle
 Dowelle, and elle3 do quat 3e demen."
 Penne sesed hym þe syre and set hym bysyde,
 Let þe ladiez be fette to lyke hem þe better.
 1085 Þer wat3 seme solace by hemself stille;
 Þe lorde let for luf lote3 so myry,
 As wy3 þat wolde of his wyte, ne wyst quat he my3t.
 Penne he carped to þe kny3t, criande loude,
 "3e han demed to do þe dede þat I bidde;
 1090 Wyl 3e halde þis hes here at þys one3?"
 "3e, sir, for soþe," sayd þe segge trwe,
 "Whyl I byde in yowre bore, be bayn to yowre hest."
 "For 3e haf trauayled," quop þe tulk, "towen
 fro ferre,
 And syþen waked me wyth, 3e arn not wel waryst
 1095 Nauþer of sostnaunce ne of slepe, soþly I knowe;
 3e schal lenge in your lofte, and ly3e in your ese
 To-morn quyle þe messequyle, and to mete wende
 When 3e wyl, wyth my wyf, þat wyth yow schal sitte
 And comfort yow with compayny, til I to cort torne;
 1100 3e lende,
 And I schal erly ryse;
 On huntynge wyl I wende."
 Gauayn grante3 alle þyse,
 Hym heldande, as þe hende.
 1105 "3et firre," quop þe freke, "a forwarde we make:
 Quat-so-euer I wynne in þe wod hit worþe3 to youre3;
 And quat chek so 3e acheue chaunge me þerforne.

Then was Gawain full glad, and gleefully he laughed:
 1080 "Now I thank you abundantly over all other things.
 Now achieved is my quest! I shall at your will
 Dwell, and else do whatever ye decide."
 Then the sire seized him and sat him beside,
 Let the ladies be fetched to please them the better.
 1085 There was seemly pleasure, in privacy by themselves;
 The lord used for love language so merry,
 Like a warrior that went out of his wit, nor knew what he did.
 Then he called to the knight, crying loud,
 "Ye have decided to do the deed that I bid;
 1090 Will ye hold this promise here for this once?"
 "Yea, sir, for sooth," said the stalwart true,
 "While I bide in your burg, I am bound to your command."
 "For ye have travelled," quoth the true knight, "a trip from
 so far,
 And then stayed up late with me; ye are not well restored,
 1095 Neither of sustenance nor of sleep, soothly I know;
 Ye shall linger in your loft, and lie in your ease
 Tomorrow during the mass-time, and to meal wend
 When ye will, with my wife, that with you shall sit
 And comfort you with company, till I to court return;
 1100 Linger herein;
 And I shall early rise;
 On hunting will I wend."
 Gawain grants this likewise,
 Holding him his friend.
 1105 "Yet further," quoth that fighter, "first let's agree:
 Whatsoever I win in the wood will be yours;
 And what ye achieve here exchange it with me for that.

Swete, swap we so, sware with trawpe,
 Queþer, leude, so lympe, lere oþer better."
 1110 "Bi God," quop Gawayn þe gode, "I grant þertylle,
 And þat yow lyst for to layke, lef hit me þynkes."
 "Who bryngeþ vus þis beuerage, þis bargayn is made."
 So sayde þe lorde of þat lede; þay lazed vchone,
 þay dronken and daylyeden and dalten vntyztel,
 1115 Þise lordez and ladyez, quyle þat hem lyked;
 And syþen with Frenkysch fare and fele fayre lotez
 þay stoden and stemed and stylly speken,
 Kysten ful comlyly and kazten her leue.
 With mony leude ful lyzt and lemande torches
 1120 Vche burne to his bed watz brozt at þe laste,
 ful softe.
 To bed zet er þay zede,
 Recorded couenauntez ofte;
 þe olde lorde of þat leude
 1125 Cowpe wel halde layk alofte.

Sweet, swap we so, swear with truth,
 Whatever, liegemen, so befalls, loss or gain."
 1110 "By God," quoth Gawain the good, "I grant that,
 And that you like such amusements, seems laudable to me."
 "Let someone bring us this beverage; this bargain is made."
 So said the lord of that land; they laughed each one,
 They drank, and dallied, and dealt unrestrained,
 1115 These lords and ladies, while they pleased;
 And then in the French fashion and many fair words
 They stood and stayed and softly spoke,
 Kissed full comely and caught their leave.
 By many liegemen with light and gleaming torches
 1120 Each brave to his bed was brought at the last
 Full soft.
 To bed yet ere they wend,
 They repeated covenants oft;
 The old lord of that land
 1125 Could well hold play aloft.

III

- Ful erly bifore þe day þe folk vprysen,
 Gestes þat go wolde hor gromes þay calden,
 And þay busken vp bilyue blonkkes to sadel,
 Tyffen her takles, trussen her males,
 1130 Richen hem þe rychest, to ryde alle arayde;
 Lepen vp lyztly, lachen her brydeles,
 Vche wyge on his way þer hym wel lyked.
 Þe leue lorde of þe londe wat3 not þe last
 Arayed for þe rydyng, with renkkes ful mony;
 1135 Ete a sop hastyly, when he hade herde masse,
 With bugle to bent-felde he buskes bylyue.
 By þat any daylyzt lemed vpon erþe
 He with his hæpeles on hyge horsres weren.
 Þenne þise cacheres þat coupe cowpled hor houndes,
 1140 Vnclosed þe kenel dore and calde hem þeroute,
 Blwe bygly in bugles þre bare mote;
 Braches bayed þefore and breme noyse maked;
 And þay chastysed and charred on chasyng þat went,
 A hundreth of hunteres, as I haf herde telle,
 1145 of þe best.
 To trystors vewters 3od,
 Couples huntres of kest;
 þer ros for blastes gode
 Gret rurd in þat forest.
 1150 At þe fyrst quethe of þe quest quaked þe wylde;
 Der drof in þe dale, doted for drede,
 Hized to þe hyge, bot heterly þay were
 Restayed with þe stablye, þat stoutly ascryed.
 Þay let þe herttes haf þe gate, with þe hyge hedes,

Full early before the day the folk get up,
 Guests that would go called their grooms,
 And they bustle up busily broncos to saddle,
 Tighten their tackle, truss up their bags,
 1130 The richest ready themselves to ride all arrayed;
 They leap up lightly, lay hold of their bridles,
 Each warrior on his way where he well pleased.
 The lively lord of the land was not the last
 Arrayed for the riding, with riders full many;
 1135 Had a snack hastily, when he had heard mass,
 With bugle to the field he briskly bounds.
 Before any daylight gleamed upon earth
 He with his horsemen on high horses mounted.
 Then these crafty handlers coupled hounds in pairs,
 1140 Unclosed the kennel door and called them there-out,
 Blew boldly in bugles three long notes;
 Big hounds bayed there-at and brave noise made;
 Handlers whipped and turned back those on false scents,
 A hundred of hunters, as I have heard tell,
 1145 Of the best.
 To their stations handlers strode;
 Leashes huntsmen off cast;
 There rose for horn-blasts good
 Great noise in that forest.

 1150 At the first sound of the quest quaked wild beasts;
 Deer drove through the dale, doddered for dread,
 Hied to the heights, but hurriedly they were
 Restrained by the beaters, that sternly shouted.
 They let the harts pass by, with their high horns,

1155 þe breme bukkez also with hor brode paumez;
 For þe fre lorde hade defende in fermysoun tyme
 þat þer schulde no mon meue to þe male dere.
 þe hindeȝ were halden in with "hay!" and "war!"
 þe does dryuen with gret dyn to þe depe sladeȝ;
 1160 þer myȝt mon se, as þay slypte, slentyng of arwes:
 At vche wende vnder wande wapped a flone
 þat bigly bote on þe broun with ful brode hedeȝ.
 What! þay brayen, and bleden, bi bonkkeȝ þay deȝen,
 And ay rachches in a res radly hem folȝes,
 1165 Huntreȝ wyth hyȝe horne hasted hem after
 Wyth such a crackkande kry as klyffes haden brusten.
 What wylde so atwaped wyȝes þat schotten
 Watȝ al toraced and rent at þe resayt,
 Bi þay were tened at þe hyȝe and taysed to þe wattreȝ;
 1170 þe ledeȝ were so lerned at þe loȝe trysteres,
 And þe grehoundeȝ so grete, þat geten hem bylyue
 And hem tofylched, as fast as frekeȝ myȝt loke,
 þer ryȝt.
 þe lorde for blys abloy
 1175 Ful oft con launce and lyȝt,
 And drof þat day wyth joy
 Thus to þe derk nyȝt.

 þus laykeȝ þis lorde by lynde-wodeȝ eueȝ,
 And Gawayn þe god mon in gay bed lyȝeȝ,
 1180 Lurkkeȝ quyl þe daylyȝt lemed on þe wowes,
 Vnder couertour ful clere, cortyned aboute;
 And as in slomeryng he slode, sleȝly he herde
 A littel dyn at his dor, and dernly vpon;

1155 The brave bucks also with their broad antlers;
 For the fine lord had forbidden in closed-season time
 That any man there should move on the male deer.
 The hinds were held in with "hey!" and "be ware!"
 The does driven with great din to the deep valley;
 1160 There might man see, as they slipped by, slanting arrows:
 At each path in the woods an arrow whipped by
 That boldly bit on the brown with broad arrowheads.
 Hey! they bellow, and bleed, by banks they die,
 And ever bloodhounds in a rush rapidly them follow;
 1165 Hunters with high horns hastened them after
 With such a crackling cry as if cliffs had burst.
 Whatever wild that escaped the warriors who shot
 Dogs pulled down and tore at the hunt station,
 When they were harassed on hills and harried to the waters;
 1170 The lads were so well trained at the low hunt-stations,
 And the greyhounds so great, that got them quickly
 And filched them faster than fighters could look
 There aright.
 The lord his bliss to enjoy
 1175 Did oft race ahead and alight,
 And drove that day with joy
 Thus to the dark night.

 Thus gallops this lord by a linden-wood's edges,
 And Gawain the good man in gay bed lies,
 1180 Lurks while the daylight gleamed on the walls,
 Under glowing coverings, curtained about;
 And as in slumbering he slid, slightly he heard
 A little din at his door, and stealthily done;

And he heuez vp his hed out of þe cloþes,
 1185 A corner of þe cortyn he caȝt vp a lyttel,
 And waytez warly þiderwarde quat hit be myȝt.
 Hit watȝ þe ladi, loflyest to beholde,
 Pat droȝ þe dor after hir ful dernly and styлле,
 And boȝed towarde þe bed; and þe burne schamed,
 1190 And layde hym doun lystyly, and let as he slepte;
 And ho stepped stilly and stel to his bedde,
 Kest vp þe cortyn and creped withinne,
 And set hir ful softly on þe bed-syde,
 And lenged þere selly longe to loke quen he wakened.
 1195 þe lede lay lurked a ful longe quyle,
 Compast in his concience to quat þat cace myȝt
 Meue oþer amount; to meruayle hym þoȝt,
 Bot ȝet he sayde in hymself, "More semly hit were
 To aspye wyth my spelle in space quat ho wolde."
 1200 þen he wakenede, and wroth, and to hir warde torned,
 And vnlouked his yȝe-lyddeȝ, and let as hym wondered,
 And sayned hym, as bi his saȝe þe sauer to worthe,
 with hande.
 Wyth chynne and cheke ful swete,
 1205 Boþe quit and red in blande;
 Ful lufly con ho lete
 Wyth lyppez smal laȝande.

"God moroun, Sir Gawayn," sayde þat gay lady,
 "ȝe ar a sleper vnslyȝe, þat mon may slyde hider;
 1210 Now ar ȝe tan as-tyt! Bot true vus may schape:
 I schal bynde yow in your bedde, þat be ȝe trayst":
 Al laȝande þe lady lanced þo bourdeȝ.
 "Goud moroun, gay," quop Gawayn þe blyþe,

And he lifts up his head out of the bedclothes,
 1185 A corner of the curtain he caught up a little,
 And looks warily thitherward what it might be.
 It was the lady, loveliest to behold,
 That drew the door after her, full stealthy and still,
 And moved toward the bed; and the brave shammed,
 1190 And laid him down cautiously, and let on that he slept;
 And she stepped stilly and stole to his bed,
 Cast up the curtain and crept within,
 And set her full softly on the bed-side,
 And lingered there very long to look when he wakened.
 1195 The lad lay lurking a full long while,
 Considered in his conscience to what that case might
 Move or amount to; a marvel he thought,
 But yet he said in himself, "More seemly it would be
 To inquire with my speech openly what she wants."
 1200 Then he awakened, and twisted, and toward her turned,
 And unlocked his eye-lids, and let on that he wondered,
 And signed himself, as if by his speech the safer to be,
 With hand.
 With chin and cheek full sweet,
 1205 Both white and red in blend;
 Full lovingly did she him greet
 With small laughing lips, as a friend.

"Good morrow, Sir Gawain," said that gay lady,
 "Ye are not a sly sleeper, that one may slip hither;
 1210 Now are ye taken in a trice! But a truce we may shape:
 I shall bind you in your bed, that be ye sure":
 All laughing the lady launched those jests.
 "Good morrow, gay," quoth Gawain the blithe,

“Me schal worþe at your wille, and þat me wel lykez,
 1215 For I zelde me zederly, and zege after grace,
 And þat is þe best, be my dome, for me byhouez nede”:
 And þus he bourded azayn with mony a blyþe laȝter;
 “Bot wolde ze, lady louely, þen leue me grante,
 And deprece your prysoun, and pray hym to ryse,
 1220 I wolde boȝe of þis bed, and busk me better;
 I schulde keuer þe more comfort to karp yow wyth.”
 “Nay for soþe, beau sir,” sayd þat swete,
 “Ze schal not rise of your bedde; I rych yow better;
 I schal happe yow here þat oþer half als,
 1225 And syþen karp wyth my knyȝt þat I kaȝt haue;
 For I wene wel, iwysse, Sir Wowen ze are,
 Þat alle þe worlde worchipeȝ quere-so ze ride;
 Your honour, your hendelayk is hendely praysed
 With lordez, wyth ladyes, with alle þat lyf bere.
 1230 And now ze ar here, iwysse, and we bot oure one;
 My lorde and his ledez ar on lenþe faren,
 Oþer burnez in her bedde, and my burdez als,
 Þe dor drawen and dit with a derf haspe;
 And syþen I haue in þis hous hym þat al lykez,
 1235 I schal ware my whyle wel, quyl hit lastez,
 with tale.
 Ze ar welcum to my cors,
 Yowre awen won to wale;
 Me behouez of fyne force
 1240 Your seruauant be, and schale.”

“In god fayth,” quop Gawayn, “gayn hit me þynkkeȝ,
 Þaȝ I be not now he þat ze of speken
 To reche to such reuerence as ze reherce here

1215 "I shall work at your will, and that I well like,
 For I yield me utterly, and yearn for grace,
 And that is best, as I believe, for I am obliged by need."
 And thus he jested in turn with many a jolly laugh:
 "But would ye, lady lovely, then grant me leave,
 And parole your prisoner, and pray him to rise,
 1220 I would bound from this bed, and prepare me better;
 I should have the more comfort to converse with you."
 "Nay for sooth, beau sir," said that sweet,
 "Ye shall not rise from your bed; I will arrange things better;
 I shall lock you here, on that other side also,
 1225 And then converse with my knight that I have caught;
 For I well know, indeed, Sir Wawain ye are,
 That all the world worships where-ever ye ride;
 Your honor, your courtesy, is courteously praised
 By lords, by ladies, by all that bear life.
 1230 And now ye are here, indeed, and we but ourselves alone;
 My lord and his lads are a long way off,
 Other braves in their beds, and my bonnie maids as well,
 The door drawn and locked with a doughty hasp;
 And since I have in this house him that all pleases,
 1235 I shall wile my while well, while it lasts,
 With tale.
 You are welcome to my body,
 Your own will to avail;
 It behooves me of pure force
 1240 Your servant be, and I shall."

"In good faith," quoth Gawain, "gainful it seems to me,
 Though I be not now he of whom ye speak
 To reach such reverence as ye rehearse here

- I am wyȝe vnworþy, I wot wel myseluen.
1245 Bi God, I were glad, and yow god þoȝt,
At saȝe oþer at seruyce þat I sette myȝt
To þe plesaunce of your prys; hit were a pure ioȝe."
"In god fayth, Sir Gawayn," quoth þe gay lady,
"Þe prys and þe prowes þat plesez al oþer,
1250 If I hit lakked oþer set at lyȝt, hit were littel daynté;
Bot hit ar ladyes innoȝe þat leuer wer nowþe
Haf þe, hende, in hor holde, as I þe habbe here,
To daly with derely your daynté wordeȝ,
Keuer hem comfort and colen her careȝ,
1255 Þen much of þe garysoun oþer golde þat þay hauen.
Bot I louue þat ilk Lorde þat þe lyfte haldeȝ,
I haf hit holly in my honde þat al desyres,
þurȝe grace."
Scho made hym so gret chere,
1260 þat watȝ so fayr of face;
Þe knyȝt with speches skere
Answered to vche a cace.
- "Madame," quoth the myry man, "Mary yow zelde,
For I haf founden, in god fayth, yowre fraunchis nobele
1265 And oþer ful much of oþer folk fongen bi hor dedeȝ,
Bot þe daynté þat þay delen, for my disert nys euen;
Hit is þe worchyp of yourself, þat noȝt bot wel conneȝ."
"Bi Mary," quoth þe menskful, "me þynk hit an oþer;
For were I worth al þe wone of wymmen alyue,
1270 And al þe wele of þe worlde were in my honde,
And I schulde chepen and chose to cheue me a lorde,
For þe costes þat I haf knowen vpon þe, knyȝt, here,

I am a warrior unworthy, I know well myself.
 1245 By God, I would be glad, and if it seemed good to you,
 That my speech or my service I might set
 To the pleasure of your self; it would be a pure joy."
 "In good faith, Sir Gawain," quoth the gay lady,
 "The praise and the prowess that pleases all others,
 1250 If I blamed it or slighted its value, it would be little pleasure;
 But there are many ladies that would rather now
 Have thee, handsome, in their hold, as I have thee here,
 Dearly to dally with your dainty words,
 Cover them with comfort and cool their cares,
 1255 Than much of the goods or gold that they have.
 But as I love that same Lord That lifts up the heavens,
 I have it wholly in my hand that all desire,
 Through grace."
 She made him much good cheer,
 1260 Who was so fair of face;
 The knight with speeches pure
 Answered to every case.

 "Madame," quoth the merry man, "May Mary reward you,
 For I have found, in good faith, your free nobility,
 1265 And full many from other folk find praise for their deeds,
 But the honor that they do to me, does not equal my deserts;
 It is the worship of yourself, who know nothing but good."
 "By Mary," quoth the mannerly, "To me it seems otherwise;
 For were I worth all the multitude of women alive,
 1270 And all the wealth of the world were in my hand,
 And I should shop and choose to purchase me a lord,
 For the qualities that I have known, in thee, knight, here,

- Of bewté and debonerté and blyþe semblaunt,
 And þat I haf er herkkened and halde hit here trwee,
 1275 Per schulde no freke vpon folde bifore yow be chosen."
 "Iwysse, worþy," quop þe wyȝe, "ȝe haf waled wel better;
 Bot I am proude of þe prys þat ȝe put on me,
 And, soberly your seruauȝt, my souerayn I holde yow,
 And yowre knyȝt I becom, and Kryst yow foryelde."
 1280 þus þay meled of muchquat til mydmorn paste,
 And ay þe lady let lyk as hym loued mych;
 þe freke ferde with defence, and feted ful fayre.
 "Þaȝ I were burde brytȝest," þe burde in mynde hade,
 "þe lasse luf in his lode for lur þat he soȝt
 1285 boute hone,
 þe dunte þat schulde hym deue,
 And nedeȝ hit most be done."
 þe lady þenn spek of leue,
 He granted hir ful sone.
- 1290 Penne ho gef hym god day, and wyth a glent laȝed,
 And as ho stod, ho stonyed hym wyth ful storwordeȝ:
 "Now He þat spedeȝ vche spech þis disport ȝelde yow!
 Bot þat ȝe be Gawan, hit gotȝ in mynde."
 "Querfore?" quop þe freke, and freschly he askeȝ,
 1295 Ferde lest he hade fayled in fourme of his castes;
 Bot þe burde hym blessed, and "Bi þis skyl" sayde:
 "So god as Gawayn gaynly is halden,
 And cortaysye is closed so clene in hymselfen,
 Couth not lyȝtly haf lenged so long wyth a lady,
 1300 Bot he had craued a cosse, bi his courtaysye,
 Bi sum towch of summe tryfle at sum taleȝ ende."

Of beauty and good manners and blithe demeanor,
 And what I have ere heard and hold it here true,
 1275 There should no fighter upon field before you be chosen."
 "Indeed, worthy," quoth the warrior, "ye have chosen better;
 But I am proud of the price that ye put on me,
 And, soberly your servant, my sovereign I hold you,
 And your knight I become, and Christ you reward."
 1280 Thus they talked of this and that till midmorning passed,
 And ever the lady let on that she him loved much;
 The fighter fared with defense, and feigned full fair.
 "Though I were the brightest," the beauty had in mind,
 "The less room for love in his luggage till his journey
 1285 Is begun,
 For the dint that shall him grieve,
 And now it must be done."
 The lady then spoke of leave;
 He granted it at once

 1290 Then she gave him good day, and with a glance laughed,
 And as she stood, she astonished him with full strong words:
 "Now He that sustains each speech for this sport reward you!
 But that ye be Gawain, it goes against what I know."
 "Wherefore?" quoth the fighter, and quickly he asks,
 1295 Feared lest he had failed in the form of his speech;
 But the lady him blessed, and said "For this reason:
 One so good as Gawain is rightly considered,
 And courtesy enclosed so completely in himself,
 Could not easily have lingered so long with a lady,
 1300 But he had craved a kiss, by his courtesy,
 By some touch of some trifle at some tale's end."

Pen quop Wowen: "Iwysse, worþe as yow lykez;
 I schal kysse at your comaundement, as a knyzt fallez,
 And fire, lest he displese yow, so plede hit no more."
 1305 Ho comes nerre with þat, and cachez hym in armez,
 Loutez luflych adoun and þe leude kyssez.
 Pay comly bykennen to Kryst ayþer oþer;
 Ho dos hir forth at þe dore withouten dyn more,
 And he ryches hym to ryse and rapes hym sone,
 1310 Clepes to his chamberlayn, choses his wede,
 Bozez forth, quen he watz boun, blyþely to masse;
 And þenne he meued to his mete þat menskly hym keped,
 And made myry al day, til þe mone rysed,
 with game.
 1315 Watz neuer freke fayrer fonge
 Bitwene two so dyngne dame,
 Þe alder and þe zonge;
 Much solace set þay same.

 And ay þe lorde of þe londe is lent on his gamnez,
 1320 To hunt in holtez and heþe at hyndeþ barayne;
 Such a sowme he þer slowe bi þat þe sunne heldet,
 Of dos and of oþer dere, to deme were wonder.
 Penne fersly þay flokked in folk at þe laste,
 And quykly of þe quelled dere a querré þay maked,
 1325 Þe best bozed þerto with burnez innoghe,
 Gedered þe grattest of gres þat þer were,
 And didden hem derely vndo as þe dede askez;
 Serched hem at þe asay summe þat þer were;
 Two fyngeres þay fonde of þe fowlest of alle.

Then quoth Wawain: "Indeed, work as you like;
 I shall kiss at your commandment, as a knight should,
 And more, lest he displease you, so plead it no more."
 1305 She comes nearer with that, and catches him in arms,
 Bows lovingly down and the liegeman kisses.
 Either the other they courteously entrust to Christ.
 She goes forth to the door without din more,
 And he prepares him to rise and rushes him soon,
 1310 Calls to his servant, selects his clothes,
 Bounds forth, when he was ready, blithely to mass;
 And then he moved to his meal that worthily him awaited,
 And made merry all day, till the moon rose,
 With game.
 1315 Was never fair fighter so well
 Received by such worthy dames,
 The elder and the belle;
 Much pleasure and ever the same.

 And ever the lord of the land is intent on his game,
 1320 To hunt in woods and heath at barren hinds;
 Such a sum he there slew till the sun went down,
 Of does and of other deer, wondrous to declare.
 Then fiercely the folk flocked in at the last,
 And quickly of the quelled deer, their quarry, made a pile,
 1325 The best bounded there-to with many braves,
 Gathered the greatest in grease that were there,
 And had them carefully cut open, as the art requires;
 Searched out at the assessment some that were there;
 Two fingers of fat they found in the least of their quarry.

- 1330 Syþen þay slyt þe slot, sesed þe erber,
 Schaued wyth a scharp knyf, and þe schyre knitten;
 Syþen rytte þay þe foure lymmes, and rent of þe hyde,
 Þen brek þay þe balé, þe bowelez out token
 Lystily for laucyng þe lere of þe knot;
 1335 Þay gryped to þe gargulun, and grayþely departed
 Þe wesaunt fro þe wynt-hole, and walt out þe guttez;
 Þen scher þay out þe schulderez with her scharp knyuez,
 Haled hem by a lyttel hole to haue hole sydes.
 Sipeþen britned þay þe brest and brayden hit in twynne,
 1340 And eft at þe gargulun bigyneþ on þenne,
 Ryuez hit vp radly ryzt to þe byzt,
 Voydez out þe avanters, and verayly þerafter
 Alle þe rymeþ by þe rybbez radly þay lance;
 So ryde þay of by resoun bi þe rygge boneþ,
 1345 Euenden to þe haunche, þat hanged alle samen,
 And heuen hit vp al hole, and hwen hit of þere,
 And þat þay neme for þe noumbles bi nome, as I trowe,
 bi kynde;
 Bi þe byzt al of þe pyzes
 1350 Þe lappez þay lance bihynde;
 To hewe hit in two þay hyzes,
 Bi þe bakbon to vnbynde.

 Boþe þe hede and þe hals þay hwen of þenne,
 And syþen sunder þay þe sydez swyft fro þe chyne,
 1355 And þe corbeles fee þay kest in a greue;
 Þenn þurled þay ayþer þik side þurz bi þe rybbe,
 And hanged þenne ayþer bi hozez of þe fourchez.
 Vche freke for his fee, as fallez for to haue.

1330 Next they slit the slot of the throat, seized the stomach,
 Shaved it with a sharp knife, and the shining flesh knotted;
 Next they ripped off the four legs, and rent off the hide,
 Then they broke open the belly, took out the bowels
 Carefully, to avoid loosening, tied back the flesh;
 1335 They proceeded to the throat, and mannerly parted
 The gullet from the windpipe, and threw out the guts;
 Then shear they out the shoulders with their sharp knives,
 Hauled them out by a little hole to keep the sides whole.
 Next broke they the breast and pulled it in two,
 1340 And then again begins one at the throat,
 Rips it up quickly right to the fork,
 Voids out the waste parts, and verily there-after
 All the membranes by the ribs rapidly they loosen;
 So correctly they cleaned the back bones,
 1345 All the way to the haunch, that it hanged all together,
 And they heave it up all whole, and hew it off there,
 And that they take for "the numbles" by name, as I believe,
 Assigned;
 By the thigh-bones they placed
 1350 The flesh they loosened behind;
 To hew it in two they haste,
 The backbone to unbind.

 Both the head and the neck they hew off then,
 And then split they the sides swiftly from the spine,
 1355 And the "crow's share" they cast in a thicket;
 Then pierced they through both thick sides by the rib,
 And hanged them both by hocks of the legs.
 Each fighter has his fee, as befits him to have.

- Vpon a felle of þe fayre best fede þay þayr houndes
1360 Wyth þe lyuer and þe lyzteȝ, þe leþer of þe pauncheȝ,
And bred baþed in blod blende þeramongeȝ.
Baldely þay blw prys, bayed þayr rachcheȝ,
Syþen fonge þay her flesche, folden to home,
Strakande ful stoutly mony stif moteȝ.
1365 Bi þat þe daylyzt watȝ done þe douthe watȝ al wonen
Into þe comly castel, þer þe knyzt bideȝ
ful stille,
Wyth blys and bryzt fyr bette.
þe lorde is comen þertylle;
1370 When Gawayn wyth hym mette
þer watȝ bot wele at wyлле.
- Thenne comaunded þe lorde in þat sale to samen alle þe
meny.
- Boþe þe ladyes on loghe to lyzt with her burdes.
Bifore alle þe folk on þe flette, frekeȝ he beddeȝ
1375 Verayly his venysoun to fech hym byforne,
And al godly in gomen Gawayn he called,
Techeȝ hym to þe tayles of ful tayt bestes,
Scheweȝ hym þe schyree grece schorne vpon rybbes.
“How payeȝ yow þis play? Haf I prys wonnen?
1380 Haue I þryuandely þonk þurȝ my craft serued?”
“Ȝe iwysse,” quop þat oper wyȝe, “here is wayth
fayrest
þat I seȝ þis seuen zere in sesoun of wynter.”
“And al I gif yow, Gawayn,” quop þe gome þenne,
“For by acorde of couenaunt ȝe craue hit as your awen.”
1385 “Þis is soth,” quop þe segge, “I say yow þat ilke:
þat I haf worthyly wonnen þis woneȝ wythinne,

1360 Upon a pelt of the fair beast feed they their hounds
 With the liver and the lungs, the lining of the stomach,
 And bread bathed in blood blended among it.
 Boldly horns blew "taken!" Their hounds bayed.
 Then take they their flesh, fare to home,
 Sounding full stoutly many long notes.
 1365 By the time daylight was done the company was all come
 Into the comely castle, where the knight bides
 Full still,
 With bliss and bright fire heat,
 Comes the lord until
 1370 Gawain with him did meet,
 And all was joy at will.

Then commanded the lord in that hall to gather the court.

Both the ladies came down with their lovely maids.
Before all the folk on the floor, fighters he bids
1375 Verily his venison to fetch before him him,
And all goodly, in game, Gawain he called,
Tells him the tally of beasts taken,
Shows him the shining grease shorn from the ribs.
“How repay you this play? Have I the prize won?
1380 Have I well-earned thanks through my craft deserved?”
“Yea indeed,” quoth that other warrior, “here is the fairest
game
That I have seen this seven year in season of winter.”
“And all I give you, Gawain,” quoth the gallant then,
“For by accord of our covenant ye may enjoy it as your own.”
1385 “This is sooth,” quoth the stalwart, “I say you the same:
What I have worthily won within these walls,

I wysse with as god wylle hit worþez to youreȝ."
 He hasppez his fayre hals his armeȝ wythinne,
 And kysses hym as comlyly as he couþe awyse:
 1390 "Tas yow þere my cheuicaunce, I cheued no more;
 I wowche hit saf fynly, þaȝ feler hit were."
 "Hit is god," quoth þe godmon, "grant mercy þerefore.
 Hit may be such hit is þe better, and ȝe me breue wolde
 Where ȝe wan þis ilk wele bi wytte of yorseluen."
 1395 "Þat watz not forward," quoth he, "frayst me no more.
 For ȝe haf tan þat yow tydeȝ, trawe non oþer
 ȝe mowe."
 þay laȝed, and made hem blyþe
 Wyth loteȝ þat were to lowe;
 1400 To soper þay ȝede as-swyþe,
 Wyth dayntés nwe innowe.

And syþen by þe chymné in chamber þay seten,
 Wyȝez þe walle wyn weȝed to hem oft,
 And efte in her bourdyng þay bayþen in þe morn
 1405 To fylle þe same forwardeȝ þat þay byfore maden:
 Wat chaunce so bytydeȝ hor cheuysaunce to chaunge,
 What nweȝ so þay nome, at naȝt quen þay metten.
 þay acorded of þe couenaunteȝ byfore þe court alle;
 þe beuerage watz broȝt forth in bourde at þat tyme.
 1410 þenne þay louelych leȝten leue at þe last;
 Vche burne to his bedde busked bylyue.
 Bi þat þe coke hade crowen and cakled bot þryse,
 þe lorde watz lopen of his bedde, þe leudeȝ vchone;
 So þat þe mete and þe masse watz metely delyuered,

Indeed with as good will it becomes yours."
 He clasps his fair neck within his arms,
 And kisses him as courteously as he knew how:
 1390 "Take you there my winnings, I won no more;
 I grant it completely, and would it were more."
 "It is good," quoth the good man, "great thanks there-for.
 It would be the better, if ye would me declare
 Where ye won this same wealth by wit of yourself."
 1395 "That was not agreed," quoth he, "ask me no more.
 For ye have taken what belongs to you; expect nothing more
 There-by."
 They laughed, and made them blithe
 With words of praise on high;
 1400 To supper they swiftly stride,
 Some dainties new to try.

And then by the chimney in chamber they sat,
 Warriors the bright wine brought to them oft,
 And again in their bantering both agree in the morn
 1405 To fulfill the same agreements that they before made:
 Whatever by chance betides, their winnings to exchange,
 Whatever new thing they take, at night when they met.
 They agreed to the covenants before all the court;
 The beverage was brought to seal the bargain then.
 1410 Then they lovingly took leave at the last;
 Each brave to his bed bounded in haste.
 By the time the cock had crowed and cackled but thrice,
 The lord had leaped from his bed, and each liegman;
 When the meal and the mass were properly served,

1415 þe douthe dressed to þe wod, er any day sprenged,
 to chace;
 Hez with hunte and hornez
 þurȝ playnez þay passe in space.
 Vncoupled among þo þorneȝ
 1420 Racheȝ þat ran on race.

 Sone þay calle of a quest in a ker syde,
 þe hunt rehayted þe houndez þat hit fyrst mynged;
 Wylde wordez hym warp wyth a wrast noyce;
 þe howndez þat hit herde hastid þider swyþe,
 1425 And fellen as fast to þe fuyt, fourty at ones;
 Penne such a glauer ande glam of gedered rachchez
 Ros, þat þe rocherez rungen aboute;
 Hunterez hem hardened with horne and wyth muthe.
 þen al in a semblé sweyed togeder,
 1430 Bitwene a flosche in þat fryth and a foo cragge;
 In a knot bi a clyffe, at þe kerre syde,
 þer as þe rogh rocher vnrydely watȝ fallen,
 þay ferden to þe fyndyng, and frekez hem after;
 þay vmbekesten þe knarre and þe knot boþe,
 1435 Wyȝez, whyl þay wysten wel wythinne hem hit were.
 þe best þat þer breued watȝ wyth þe blodhoundez.
 Penne þay beten on þe buskez, and bede hym vpryse,
 And he vnsoundyly out soȝt seggez ouerþwert;
 On þe sellokest swyn swenged out þere,
 1440 Long sythen fro þe sounder þat sized for olde,
 For he watȝ breme, bor alþer-grattest,
 Ful grymme quen he gronyed; þenne greued mony,
 For þre at þe fyrst þrast he þryȝt to þe erþe,

1415 The company dashed to the wood, ere any day sprang,
 To the chase;
 Hasting with hunters and horns;
 Through plains they race.
 Uncoupled among those thorns
 1420 Hounds that rushed apace.

 Soon they call of a quarry found on a marsh's side,
 The hunter urged on the hounds that found it first;
 Wild words they shouted with a loud noise;
 The hounds that heard it hastened thither swiftly,
 1425 And fell fast to the track, forty at once;
 Then such a great barking and din of gathered hounds
 Arose, that the rocky hills rang all about;
 Hunters them heartened with horn and with mouth.
 Then all in a solid pack swiftly came together,
 1430 Between a pool in that forest and a forbidding crag;
 In a cluster by a cliff, at the marsh's side,
 Where the rough rock in ruins was fallen,
 Hounds fared to the find, and fighters them after;
 They searched around the rocky hill and the summit as well,
 1435 Warriors, while they knew well within there it was.
 The best that there bayed were with the bloodhounds.
 Then they beat on the bushes, and bade him uprise,
 And he, disastrously, sought out stalwarts in his path;
 The most splendid swine swung out there,
 1440 Long since from the herd set apart for age,
 For he was brave, biggest of all boars,
 Full grim when he growled; then grieved many,
 For three at the first thrust he threw to the earth,

- And sparred forth good sped boutē spyt more.
- 1445 Þise oþer halowed “Hyghe!” ful hyȝe, and “Hay! Hay!” cryed,
 Haden hornēȝ to mouþe, heterly rechated:
 Mony watȝ þe myry mouthe of men and of houndēȝ
 Þat buskkeȝ after þis bor with bost and wyth noyse
 to quelle.
- 1450 Ful oft he bydeȝ þe baye,
 And maymeȝ þe mute inn melle;
 He hurteȝ of þe houndēȝ, and þay
 Ful ȝomerly ȝaule and ȝelle.
- Schalkeȝ to schote at hym schowen to þenne,
- 1455 Haled to hym of her areweȝ, hitten hym oft;
 Bot þe poynteȝ payred at þe pyth þat pyȝt in his scheldeȝ,
 And þe barbeȝ of his browe bite non wolde;
 Þaȝ þe schauen schaft schyndered in peceȝ,
 Þe hede hypped aȝayn were-so-euer hit hitte.
- 1460 Bot quen þe dynteȝ hym dered of her dryȝe strokeȝ,
 Pen, braynwod for bate, on burneȝ he raseȝ,
 Hurteȝ hem ful heterly þer he forth hyȝeȝ,
 And mony arȝed þerat, and on lyte droȝen.
- 1465 Bot þe lorde on a lyȝt horce launces hym after,
 As burne bolde vpon bent his bugle he bloweȝ,
 He rechated, and rode þurȝ roneȝ ful þyk,
 Suande þis wylde swyn til þe sunne schafted.
 Þis day wyth þis ilk dede þay dryuen on þis wyse,
 Whyle oure luflych lede lys in his bedde,
- 1470 Gawayn grayþely at home, in gereȝ ful ryche
 of hewe.
 Þe lady noȝt forȝate,
 Com to hym to salue.

And sprang forth at good speed despite his harms.
 1445 The others shouted "Hurry!" full high, and "Hey! Hey!" cried,
 Had horns to mouth, heartily sounded "recall":
 Many were the merry sounds of men and of hounds
 That bound after this boar with boast and with noise
 Full fell.
 1450 Full oft he bides at bay,
 And maims the pack pell-mell;
 He hurts some hounds, and they
 Full piteously yowl and yell.

 Chevaliers to shoot at him shove forth then,
 1455 Have at him with their arrows, hit him oft;
 But the points hitting the shoulder its strength blunted
 And none could bite into the bristles of his brow;
 Though the sharpened shaft shattered in pieces,
 The arrow-head rebounded where-so-ever it hit.
 1460 But when the hits him hurt with their heavy strokes,
 Then, brain-mad for battle, on braves he rushes,
 Hurts them full hatefully where he forth hastens,
 And many feared there-at, and drew back a little.
 But the lord on a lively horse leaps him after,
 1465 And the brave one, bold on the field, his bugle he blows,
 He blew "recall," and rode through bushes full thick,
 Pursuing this wild swine till the sun settled.
 All day with this same deed they do in this way,
 While our lovely lad lies in his bed,
 1470 Gawain gracefully at home, in garments full rich
 Of hue.
 The lady did not forget,
 To come to him for her due.

Ful erly ho watȝ hym ate
1475 His mode for to remwe.

Ho commes to þe cortyn, and at þe knyȝt totes.
Sir Wawen her welcumed worþy on fyrst,
And ho hym zeldez aȝayn ful ȝerne of hir wordez,
Settez hir softly by his syde, and swyþely ho laȝez,
1480 And wyth a luflych loke ho layde hym þyse wordez:
“Sir, ȝif ȝe be Wawen, wonder me þynkkeȝ,
Wyȝe þat is so wel wrast alway to god,
And conneȝ not of compaynye þe costeȝ vndertake,
And if mon kennes yow hom to knowe, ȝe kest hom of your
mynde.

1485 þou hatȝ forȝeten ȝederly þat ȝisterday I taȝtte
Bi alder-truest token of talk þat I cowþe.”
“What is þat?” quop þe wyȝe, “Iwysse I wot neuer;
If hit be sothe þat ȝe breue, þe blame is myn awen.”
“Ȝet I kende yow of kyssyng,” quop þe clere þenne,
1490 “Quere-so countenaunce is coupe quikly to clayme;
þat bicumes vche a knyȝt þat cortaysy vses.”
“Do way,” quop þat derf mon, “my dere, þat speche,
For þat durst I not do, lest I deuayed were;
If I were werned, I were wrang, iwysse, ȝif I profered.”
1495 “Ma fay,” quop þe meré wyf, “Ȝe may not be werned,
Ȝe ar stif innoghe to constrayne wyth strenkþe, ȝif yow lykeȝ,
Ȝif any were so vilanous þat yow devaye wolde.”
“Ȝe, be God,” quop Gawayn, “good is your speche,
Bot þrete is vnþryuande in þede þer I lende,
1500 And vche gift þat is geuen not with goud wylle.
I am at your comaundement, to kysse quen yow lykeȝ,

Full early she him beset
1475 His mood for to subdue.

She comes to the curtain, and at the knight peeks.
Sir Wawain her welcomed, worthily speaking first,
And she replies to him again full eagerly in her words,
Sits her softly by his side, and sweetly she laughs,
1480 And with a lovely look she laid on him these words:
"Sir, if ye be Wawain, it seems a wonder to me,
A warrior that is so well disposed always doing good,
And can not of company the customs understand,
And if one teaches you, ye cast them from your
mind.
1485 Thou hast forgotten already what yesterday I taught
By the truest teaching of talk that I know."
"What is that?" quoth the warrior, "Indeed I knew never;
If it be sooth that ye say, the blame is mine own."
"Yet I taught you of kissing," quoth the glowing one then,
1490 "Where-ever favor is known quickly to claim it;
That becomes each knight that courtesy uses."
"Do away," quoth that doughty man, "my dear, that speech,
For that dare I not do, lest I denied were;
If I were refused, I would be wrong, indeed, if I proffered."
1495 "By my faith," quoth the merry one, "ye can not be denied,
Ye are stout enough to constrain with strength, if you like,
If any were so churlish that she would deny you."
"Yea, by God," quoth Gawain, "good is your speech,
But threat does not thrive in the country where I live,
1500 And each gift that is not given with good will.
I am at your commandment, to kiss when you like,

3e may lach quen yow lyst, and leue quen yow þynkkez,
in space."

1505 Þe lady louteȝ adoun,
And comlyly kysses his face,
Much speche þay þer expoun
Of druryes greme and grace.

1510 "I woled wyt at yow, wyȝe," þat worpy þer sayde,
"And yow wrathed not þerwyth, what were þe skylle
Pat so zong and so zepe as ȝe at þis tyme,
So cortayse, so knyȝtyly, as ȝe ar knowne oute
(And of alle cheualry to chose, þe chef þyng alosed
Is þe lel layk of luf, þe lettrure of armes;
For to telle of þis teuelyng of þis trwe knyȝteȝ,
1515 Hit is þe tyelet token and tyxt of her werkkeȝ,
How ledes for her lele luf hor lyueȝ han auntered,
Endured for her drury dulful stoundeȝ,
And after wenged with her walour and voyded her care,
And broȝt blysse into boure with bountees hor awen)
1520 And ȝe ar knyȝt comlokest kyd of your elde;
Your worde and your worchip walkeȝ ayquere,
And I haf seten by yourself here sere twyes;
ȝet herde I neuer of your hed helde no wordeȝ
Pat euer longed to luf, lasse ne more;
1525 And ȝe, þat ar so cortays and coynt of your hetes,
Oghe to a zonke þynk ȝern to schewe
And teche sum tokeneȝ of trweluf craftes.
Why! ar ȝe lewed, þat alle þe los weldeȝ?

Ye may take one when you will, and leave when you please,
This place."

1505 The lady leans down,
And comely kisses his face,
Much speech they there expound
Of Love's grief and grace.

"I want to know from you, warrior," that worthy there said,
"If you would not be angry there-with, what was the reason
1510 That so young and so youthful as ye at this time,
So courteous, so knightly, as ye are known all around
(And since of all chivalry to choose, the chief thing praised
Is the loyal game of love, the literature of arms;
To tell of the trials of these true knights,
1515 Are written tales and great tomes on their works,
How lads for their loyal loves their lives have endangered,
Endured for their dear ones doleful adventures,
And after were avenged by their valor and their care averted,
And brought blissfully into bower by their own brave deeds).
1520 And ye are knight most comely known of your age;
Your word and your worship are widely known,
And I have sat here by yourself two separate times;
Yet heard I never that your head held any words
That ever belonged to love, less nor more;
1525 And ye, that are so courteous and clever about promises,
Ought to a young thing yearn to show
And teach some examples of true love crafts.
Why! are ye unlettered, who all the lauds wilds?

- Oþer elles ȝe demen me to dille your dalyaunce to herken?
 1530 for schame!
 I com hider sengel, and sitte
 To lerne at yow sum game;
 Dos, techez me of your wytte,
 Whil my lorde is fro hame."
- 1535 "In goud fayþe," quoth Gawayn, "God yow forȝelde!
 Gret is þe gode gle, and gomen to me huge,
 þat so worþy as ȝe wolde wyne hidere,
 And pyne yow with so pouer a mon, as play wyth your knyȝt
 With anys kynneȝ countenaunce, hit keuereȝ me ese;
 1540 Bot to take þe toruayle to myself to trwluf expoun,
 And towche þe temez of tyxt and taleȝ of armeȝ
 To yow þat, I wot wel, weldeȝ more slyȝt
 Of þat art, bi þe half, or a hundreth of seche
 As I am, oþer euer schal, in erde þer I leue,
 1545 Hit were a folé felefolde, my fre, by my trawþe.
 I wolde yowre wylnyng worche at my myȝt,
 As I am hyȝly bihalden, and euer more wylle
 Be seruauant to yourseluen, so saue me Dryȝtyn!"
 þus hym frayned þat fre, and fondet hym ofte,
 1550 For to haf wonnen hym to woȝe, what-so scho þoȝt elleȝ;
 Bot he defended hym so fayr þat no faut semed,
 Ne non euel on nawþer halue, nawþer þay wysten
 bot blysse.
 þay laȝed and layked longe;
 1555 At þe last scho con hym kysse.
 Hir leue fayre con scho fonge
 And went hir waye, iwysse.

Or else deem ye me too dull your dalliance to heed?

1530 But stay!

 I come hither single, and sit
 To learn from you some play;
 Do, teach me of your wit,
 While my lord is away."

1535 "In good faith," quoth Gawain, "God you reward!
 Great is the good glee, and gladness to me huge,
 That so worthy as ye would wend hither,
 And take pains for so poor a man, and amuse your knight
 With any sort of attentions recovers my ease;

1540 But to take the travail to myself to expound true love,
 And tell the themes of texts and tales of arms
 To you that, I know well, wield more skill
 In that art, by the half, or a hundred of such
 As I am, or ever shall be, in earth where I live,

1545 It were a folly manifold, my fair, by my troth.
 I would work your will according to my power,
 As I am highly obligated, and evermore will
 Be servant to yourself, so save me Dear Lord!"

 Thus she tested that fair one, and tempted him often,

1550 For to have won him to woe, what-ever she thought else;
 But he defended him so fair that no fault was seen,
 Nor of evil on either side, naught did they know
 But bliss.

 They laughed and played for long;

1555 At the last she did him kiss.
 Her leave she did not prolong
 But went her way, with this.

Then ruþes hym þe renk and ryses to þe masse,
 And siþen hor diner wat3 dyzt and derely serued.
 1560 þe lede with þe ladyez layked alle day,
 Bot þe lorde ouer þe londez launced ful ofte,
 Swez his vncely swyn, þat swyngez bi þe bonkkez
 And bote þe best of his brachez þe bakkez in sunder
 þer he bode in his bay, tel bawemen hit breken,
 1565 And madee hym mawgref his hed for to mwe vtter,
 So felle flonez þer flete when þe folk gedered.
 Bot zet þe styffest to start bi stoundez he made,
 Til at þe last he wat3 so mat he myzt no more renne,
 Bot in þe hast þat he myzt he to a hole wynnez
 1570 Of a rasse bi a rokk þer rennez þe boerne.
 He gete þe bonk at his bak, bigyne3 to scrape,
 þe froþe femed at his mouth vnfayre bi þe wykez,
 Whette3 his whyte tuschez; with hym þen irked
 Alle þe burnez so bolde þat hym by stoden
 1575 To nye hym onferum, bot neze hym non durst
 for woþe;
 He hade hurt so mony byforne
 þat al þu3t þenne ful loþe
 Be more wyth his tusches torne,
 1580 þat breme wat3 and braynwod bothe,

 Til þe knyzt com hymself, kachande his blonk,
 Sy3 hym byde at þe bay, his burnez bysyde;
 He lyztes luflych adoun, leuez his corsour,
 Braydez out a bryzt bront and bigly forth strydez,
 1585 Foundez fast þur3 þe forth þer þe felle bydez.
 þe wylde wat3 war of þe wy3e with weppen in honde,

Then the rider bestirs him and rises to hear mass,
 And dinner was ready and decorously served.
 1560 The lad with the ladies delighted himself all day,
 But the lord over the lands galloped full oft,
 Pursues this fierce swine, that swings by the banks
 And of the best of his hounds bit the backs in two
 Where he abode at bay, until bow-men broke it out,
 1565 And forced him, despite his heed, to move farther out,
 So many arrows there flew when the folk gathered.
 Yet at times he made the strongest to start back,
 Till at the last he was so tired that he could no more run,
 But in such haste as he could he wends to a hole
 1570 Of a ledge by a rock where runs the stream.
 He got the bank to his back, begins to scrape the ground,
 The froth foamed at his mouth, foul by its corners,
 Whets his white tusks; with him then were angry
 All the braves so bold that by him stood
 1575 To annoy him from afar, but nigh him none dared
 Approach;
 He had hurt so many before
 That all were then full loath
 To be more with his tusks tore,
 1580 By one fierce and brain-mad both,

 Till the knight came himself, spurring his bronc,
 Saw him abide at bay, his braves beside;
 He lights lively adown, leaves his courser,
 Brandishes a bright broadsword and boldly strides forth,
 1585 Rushes fast through the stream where the fierce one abides.
 The beast was aware of the warrior with weapon in hand,

Hef hyȝly þe here, so hetterly he fnast
 Þat fele ferde for þe freke, lest felle hym þe worre.
 Þe swyn setteȝ hym out on þe segge euen,
 1590 Þat þe burne and þe bor were boþe vpon hepeȝ
 In þe wyȝtest of þe water; þe worre hade þat oþer,
 For þe mon merkkeȝ hym wel, as þay mette fyrst,
 Set sadly þe scharp in þe slot euen,
 Hit hym vp to þe hult, þat þe hert schyndered,
 1595 And he ȝarrande hym ȝelde, and ȝedoun þe water
 ful tyt.
 A hundreth houndeȝ hym hent,
 Þat bremely con hym bite,
 Burneȝ him broȝt to bent,
 1600 And doggeȝ to dethe endite.

 There watȝ blawynȝ of “prys” in mony breme horne,
 Heȝe halowing on hiȝe with haþeleȝ þat myȝt;
 Brachetes bayed þat best, as bidden þe maystereȝ
 Of þat chargeaunt chace þat were chef huntes.
 1605 Þenne a wyȝe þat watȝ wys vpon wodcrafteȝ
 To vnlace þis bor lufly bigynneȝ.
 Fyrst he hewes of his hed and on hiȝe setteȝ,
 And syþen rendeȝ him al roȝe bi þe rygge after,
 Braydeȝ out þe boweles, brenneȝ hom on glede,
 1610 With bred blent þerwith his braches rewardeȝ.
 Syþen he britneȝ out þe brawen in bryȝt brode cheldeȝ,
 And hatȝ out þe hastletteȝ, as hiȝtly bisemeȝ;
 And tet hem halcheȝ al hole þe halueȝ togeder,
 And syþen on a stif stange stoutly hem henges.

High bristled the hair, so hatefully he snorted
 That many feared for the fighter, lest befell to him the worse.
 The swine sets himself out, straight at the stalwart,
 1590 That the brave and the boar were both in a heap
 In the wildest of the water; the worse had that other,
 For the man marks him well, as they met first,
 Set firmly the sword straight in the throat-slot,
 Hit him up to the hilt, that the heart sundered,
 1595 And he, snarling, him yielded, and went down in the water
 And sit.
 A hundred hounds at him went,
 That fiercely him bit,
 Braves to the open him sent,
 1600 And dogs to death him commit.

There was blowing of "taken" in many brave horns,
 High hallooing on height by horsemen that knew how;
 Hounds bayed their best, as bade their masters
 Of that challenging chase that were the chief hunters.
 1605 Then a warrior that was wise upon woodcraft
 To carve this boar lovingly begins.
 First he hews off his head and on high sets it,
 And next rips him all rough by the spine after,
 Brings out the bowels, burns them on coals,
 1610 With bread blended there-with to bestow on his hounds.
 Next he butchers out the brawn in bright broad slabs,
 And has out the entrails, as rightly befits;
 And next fastens all whole the halves together,
 And then on a strong pole stoutly them hangs.

- 1615 Now with þis ilk swyn þay swengen to home;
 Þe bores hed watȝ borne before þe burnes seluen
 Þat him forferde in þe forþe þurȝ forse of his honde
 so stronge.
 Til he seȝ Sir Gawayne
- 1620 In halle hym þoȝt ful longe;
 He calde, and he com gayn
 His feeȝ þer for to fonge.
- Þe lorde ful lowde with lote and laȝter myry,
 When he seȝe Sir Gawayn, with solace he spekeȝ;
 1625 Þe goude ladyeȝ were geten, and gedered þe meyny;
 He scheweȝ hem þe scheldeȝ, and schapes hem þe tale
 Of þe largesse and þe lenþe, þe liþerneȝ alse
 Of þe were of þe wylde swyn in wod þer he fled.
 Þat oþer knyȝt ful comly comended his dedeȝ,
 1630 And praysed hit as gret prys þat he proued hade,
 For suche a brawne of a best, þe bolde burne sayde,
 Ne such sydes of a swyn seȝh he neuer are.
 Þenne hondeled þay þe hoge hed, þe hende mon hit praysed,
 And let lodly þerat þe lorde for to here.
- 1635 "Now, Gawayn," quop þe godmon, "þis gomen is your awen
 Bi fyn forwarde and faste, faythely ȝe knowe."
 "Hit is sothe," quop þe segge, "and as siker trwe
 Alle my get I schal yow gif agayn, bi my trawþe."
 He hent þe hapel aboute þe halse, and hendely hym kysses,
 1640 And eftersones of þe same he serued hym þere.
 "Now ar we euen," quop þe hapel, "in þis euentide

1615 Now with this same swine they swung toward home;
 The boar's head was borne before the brave himself
 That defeated him in the ford through force of his hand,
 So strong.
 Till he saw Sir Gawain
 1620 In hall he thought it full long;
 He called, and Gawain came again
 For the share that to him belongs.

 The lord full loud with speech and laughter merry,
 When he saw Sir Gawain, with pleasure he speaks;
 1625 The good ladies were gotten, and the courtiers gathered;
 He shows them the shoulders, and shapes for them the tale
 Of the largeness and the length, and the loathsomeness also
 Of the war with the wild swine in wood where he fled.
 That other knight full comely commended his deeds,
 1630 And praised it as great prowess that he had proved,
 For such brawn of a beast, the bold brave said,
 Nor such sides of a swine saw he never ere.
 Then handled they the huge head; the courtly one praised it,
 And let on he was jealous, for the lord to hear.
 1635 "Now, Gawain," quoth the good man, "this game is your own
 By fine covenant and firm, faithfully ye know."
 "It is sooth," quoth the stalwart, "and as surely true
 All I got I shall give you in turn, by my troth."
 He holds the horseman by the neck, and honorably him kisses,
 1640 And soon after of the same he served him there.
 "Now are we even," quoth the horseman, "in this eventide

Of alle þe couenauntes þat we knyht, syþen I com hider,
bi lawe."

1645 þe lorde sayde, "Bi Saynt Gile,
3e ar þe best þat I knowe!
3e ben ryche in a whyle,
Such chaffer and 3e drowe."

Penne þay teldet tablez trestes alofte,
Kesten cloþen vpon; clere lyzt þenne
1650 Wakned bi woʒez, waxen torches;
Seggez sette and serued in sale al aboute;
Much glam and gle glent vp þerinne
Aboute þe fyre vpon flet, and on fele wyse
At þe soper and after, mony aþel songez,
1655 As coundutes of Krystmasse and carolez newe
With al þe manerly merþe þat mon may of telle,
And euer oure luflych knyzt þe lady bisyde.
Such semblaunt to þat segge semly ho made
Wyth stille stollen countenaunce, þat stalworth to plese,
1660 þat al forwondered wat3 þe wyʒe, and wroth with hymselfen,
Bot he nolde not for his nurture nurne hir aʒayneʒ,
Bot dalt with hir al in daynté, how-se-euer þe dede turned
towrast.

1665 Quen þay hade played in halle
As longe as hor wyll hom last,
To chambre he con hym calle,
And to þe chemné þay past.

Ande þer þay dronken, and dalten, and demed eft nwe
To norne on þe same note on Nwe 3ereʒ euen

Of all the covenants we knitted since I came hither,
By law."

1645 The lord said, "By Saint Gile,
Ye are the best that ever I saw!
Ye will be rich in a while,
If on such dealings ye draw."

Then they set up tables on tops of trestles,
Cast cloths upon them; clear light then
1650 Awakened on the walls, in wax torches;
Stalwarts were seated and served in the hall all about;
Sounds of gladness and glee go up there-in
About the fire upon the floor, and in many fine ways
At the supper and after, many elegant songs,
1655 As songs of Christmas and carols new
With all the mannerly mirth that men may of tell,
And ever our lovely knight the lady beside.
Such sweet looks to that stalwart seemly she made
With still, stolen gestures, that stalwart to please,
1660 That all in wonder was the warrior, and wroth with himself,
But he would not, for his good manners, merely deny her,
But dealt with her all in delicacy, how-so-ever it seemed
At last.

When they were amused in hall
1665 As long as their will held fast,
To chamber he did him call,
And to the chimney they passed.

And there they drank, and dallied, and decided again
To agree on the same conditions for New Year's Eve

- 1670 Bot þe knyzt craued leue to kayre on þe morn,
 For hit watȝ neȝ at þe terme þat he to schulde.
 Þe lorde hym letted of þat, to lenge hym resteyed,
 And sayde, "As I am trwe segge, I siker my trawþe
 Pou schal cheue to þe Grene Chapel þy charres to make,
- 1675 Leude, on Nw ȝereȝ lyȝt, longe bifore pryme.
 Forþy þow lye in þy loft and lach þyn ese,
 And I schal hunt in þis holt, and halde þe towcheȝ,
 Chaunge wyth þe cheuisaunce, bi þat I charre hider;
 For I haf fraysted þe twys, and faythful I fynde þe.
- 1680 Now 'þrid tyme þrowe best.' Penk on þe morne,
 Make we mery quyl we may and mynne vpon joye,
 For þe lur may mon lach when-so mon lykeȝ."
 Þis watȝ grayþely graunted, and Gawayn is lenged;
 Bliþe broȝt watȝ hym drynk, and þay to bedde ȝeden
- 1685 with liȝt.
 Sir Gawayn lis and slepes
 Ful stille and softe al niȝt;
 Þe lorde þat his crafteȝ kepes,
 Ful erly he watȝ diȝt.
- 1690 After messe a morsel he and his men token;
 Miry watȝ þe mornynȝ, his mounture he askes.
 Alle þe hæþeles þat on horse schulde helden hym after
 Were boun busked on hor blonkkeȝ bifore þe halle ȝateȝ.
 Ferly fayre watȝ þe folde, for þe forst clenged;
- 1695 In rede rudede vpon rak rises þe sunne,
 And ful clere costeȝ þe clowdes of þe welkyn.
 Hunteres vnhardeled bi a holt syde,
 Rocheres rounȝen bi rys for rurde of her hornes;
 Summe fel in þe fute þer þe fox bade,

1670 But the knight prayed leave to depart on the morn,
 For it was nearly the time that he should go.
 The lord prevented that, to stay longer him constrained,
 And said, "As I am stalwart knight, I stake my troth
 Thou shalt arrive at the Green Chapel thy affairs to settle,
 1675 Liegeman, on New Year's first light, long before prime.
 Therefore lie thou in thy loft and take thine ease,
 And I shall hunt in this wood, and hold the terms,
 Exchange with thee the profit of what I acquire hither;
 For I have tested thee twice, and truthful I find thee.
 1680 Now 'third time best throw.' Think on the morn,
 Make we merry while we may and be mindful of joy,
 For sorrow may one take whenever one likes."
 This was gracefully granted, and Gawain is delayed;
 Blithely brought was drink, and to bed they went
 1685 With light.
 Sir Gawain lies and sleeps
 Full still and soft all night;
 The lord that his crafts keeps,
 Was ready at first daylight.

 1690 After mass a morsel he and his men took;
 Merry was the morning; his mount he asks.
 All the horsemen that on horse hold the way him after
 Were ready, bestride their broncs, before the hall gates.
 Wonderfully fair was the field, for the frost clung;
 1695 In red, ruddy upon clouds, rises the sun,
 And full clear coasted the clouds from the skies.
 Hunters unleashed hounds by a high wood's side,
 Rocks rang in the woods from the roar of their horns;
 Some found the scent in the track where the fox waited,

- 1700 Traylez ofte a traueres bi traunt of her wyles;
 A kenet kryes þerof, þe hunt on hym calles;
 His felazes fallen hym to, þat fnasted ful þike,
 Runnen forth in a rabel in his ryzt fare,
 And he fyskez hem byfore; þay founden hym sone,
 1705 And quen þay seze hym with syzt þay sued hym fast,
 Wrezande hym ful weterly with a wroth noyse;
 And he trantes and tornayeez þurȝ mony tene greue,
 Hauilounēz, and herkenez bi heggez ful ofte.
 At þe last bi a littel dich he lepez ouer a spenne,
 1710 Stelez out ful stilly bi a strothe rande,
 Went haf wylt of þe wode with wylez fro þe houndes;
 Penne watȝ he went, er he wyst, to a wale tryster,
 þer þre þro at a þrich þrat hym at ones,
 al graye.
 1715 He blenched azayn bilyue
 And stifly start onstray,
 With alle þe wo on lyue
 To þe wod he went away.

 Thenne watȝ hit list vpon lif to lyþen þe houndez,
 1720 When alle þe mute hade hym met, menged togeder:
 Suche a sorȝe at þat syzt þay sette on his hede
 As alle þe clamberande clyffes hade clatered on hepes;
 Here he watȝ halawed, when haþelez hym metten,
 Loude he watȝ zayned with zārānde speche;
 1725 þer he watȝ þreted and ofte þef called,
 And ay þe titleres at his tayl, þat tary he ne myzt;
 Ofte he watȝ runnen at, when he out rayked,
 And ofte reled in azayn, so Reniarde watȝ wylé.

1700 And oft came upon it again by the cunning of their wiles;
 A small hound cries there-of, the huntsman on him calls;
 His fellows rush to him, that panted full hard,
 Run forth in a rabble on the right track,
 And the fox flees them before; they found him soon,
 1705 And when they saw him with sight they pursued him fast,
 Denouncing him full wildly with a wrathful noise;
 And he twists and turns through many tough thickets,
 Doubles back, and hearkens by hedges full oft.
 At the last by a little ditch he leaps over a hedge,
 1710 Steals out full silently beside a small wood,
 Thought he escaped from the wood by wiles for the hounds;
 Then he went, ere he was aware, to a well-made blind,
 Where three fierce hounds thrust forth and threaten him,
 All gray.
 1715 He bounded back from the strife
 And swiftly turned from the fray;
 With all the woe on life
 To the wood he went away.

 Then was it a pleasant life to listen to the hounds,
 1720 When all the pack had met him, mingled together:
 Such a curse at that sight they set on his head
 As if all the clustering cliffs had fallen, clattered in heaps;
 Here he was hallooed, when horsemen him met,
 Loud he was insulted with snarling speech;
 1725 There he was threatened and often thief called,
 And always the hounds at his tail, that he could not tarry;
 Often he was run at, when he rushed out,
 And often ran back in again, Reynard was so wily.

- And ȝe! He lad hem bi lagmon, þe lorde and his meyny,
 1730 On þis maner bi þe mountes quyle myd-ouer-vnder,
 Whyle þe hende knyȝt at home holsumly slepes
 Withinne þe comly cortynes, on þe colde morne.
 Bot þe lady for luf let not to slepe,
 Ne þe purpose to payre þat pyȝt in hir hert,
 1735 Bot ros hir vp radly, rayked hir þeder
 In a mery mantyle, mete to þe erþe,
 Pat watȝ furred ful fyne with felleȝ wel pured,
 No hwez goud on hir hede bot þe hazer stones
 Trased aboute hir tressour be twenty in clusteres;
 1740 Hir þryuen face and hir þrote þrowen al naked,
 Hir brest bare bifore, and bihinde eke.
 Ho comeȝ withinne þe chambre dore, and closes hit hir after,
 Wayueȝ vp a wyndow, and on þe wyȝe calleȝ,
 And radly þus rehayted hym with hir riche wordes,
 1745 with chere:
 "A! mon, how may þou slepe?
 Þis morning is so clere."
 He watȝ in drowping depe,
 Bot þenne he con hir here.
- 1750 In drez droupyng of dreme draueled þat noble,
 As mon þat watȝ in mornyng of mony þro þoȝtes,
 How þat destiné schulde þat day dele hym his wyrde
 At þe Grene Chapel, when he þe gome metes,
 And bihoues his buffet abide withoute debate more;
 1755 Bot quen þat comly com he keuered his wyttes,
 Swenges out of þe sweuenes, and swareȝ with hast.

And yea! He led them by trickery, the lord and his court,
 1730 In this manner by the mountains all mid-afternoon,
 While the courtly knight at home wholesomely sleeps
 Within the comely curtains, on the cold morn.
 But the lady for love did not let herself sleep,
 Nor the purpose to pall that was placed in her heart,
 1735 But rose her up rapidly, hurried herself thither
 In a merry mantle, reaching to the earth,
 That was lined full fine with fur well trimmed,
 No good hues on her head but the well wrought jewels,
 Traced about her coif in clusters of twenty;
 1740 Her fair face and her throat flaunted all naked,
 Her breast bare before, and behind also.
 She comes within the chamber door, and closes it her after,
 Wide opens up a window, and on the warrior calls,
 And right away thus rebuked him with her rich words,
 1745 And cheer:
 "Ah! Man, how can thou sleep?
 This morning is so clear."
 He was in drowsing deep,
 But then he did her hear.
 1750 In deep drowsing of dream driveled that noble,
 As man that was in mourning for many sad thoughts,
 How that destiny should that day deal him his fate
 At the Green Chapel, when he the gallant meets,
 And it behooves him his buffet abide without debate;
 1755 But when that comely came he recovered his wits,
 Swings out of the dreams, and signs himself with haste.

- Þe lady luflych com lazande swete,
 Felle ouer his fayre face, and fetly hym kyssed;
 He welcumeȝ hir worpily with a wale chere.
 1760 He seȝ hir so glorious and gayly atyred,
 So fautles of hir fetures and of so fyne hewes,
 Wiȝt wallande joye warmed his hert.
 With smoȝe smylyng and smolt þay smeten into merȝe,
 Þat al watȝ blis and bonchef þat breke hem bitwene,
 1765 and wyne.
 Þay lanced wordes gode;
 Much wele þen watȝ þerinne;
 Gret perile bitwene hem stod,
 Nif Maré hir knyȝt mynne.
 1770 For þat prynces of pris depresed hym so þikke,
 Nurned hym so neȝe þe þred, þat nede hym bihoued
 Oþer lach þer hir luf, oþer lodly refuse.
 He cared for his cortaysye, lest craȝayn he were,
 And more for his meschef ȝif he schulde make synne,
 1775 And be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aȝt.
 "God schylde," quop þe schalk, "þat schal not befalle!"
 With luf-lazyng a lyt he layd hym bysyde
 Alle þe spechez of specialté þat sprange of her mouthe.
 Quop þat burde to þe burne, "Blame ȝe disserue,
 1780 ȝif ȝe luf not þat lyf þat ȝe lye nexte,
 Bifore alle þe wyȝeȝ in þe worlde wounded in hert,
 Bot if ȝe haf a lemman, a leuer, þat yow lykeȝ better,
 And folden fayth to þat fre, festned so harde
 Þat yow lausen ne lyst and þat I leue nouȝe;

The lady lovingly came, laughing sweetly,
 Bent over his fair face, and fondly kissed him;
 He welcomes her worthily with warm good cheer.
 1760 He saw her so glorious and gayly attired,
 So faultless of her features and of such fine hues,
 Strong welling joy warmed his heart.
 With smooth smiling and gentle they settled into mirth,
 That all was bliss and happiness between them enjoyed,
 1765 And then.
 They chattered words good;
 Much joy then was there-in;
 Great peril between them stood,
 But Mary kept her knight from sin.

 1770 For that princess of excellence pressed him so hard,
 Pushed him so nigh the thread, that by need he must
 Either take there her love, or loathly refuse.
 He cared for his courtesy, lest craven he were,
 And more for his mischief if he should make sin,
 1775 And be traitor to that knight that owned that castle.
 "God be my shield," quoth the champion, "that shall not be!"
 With love-laughing a little he laid aside
 All speeches of affection that sprang from her mouth.
 Quoth that lady to the brave, "Blame ye deserve,
 1780 If ye love not that life that ye lie next,
 Before all the creatures in the world wounded in heart,
 Unless ye have a lady, a lover, that you like better,
 And have fixed your faith to that fine one, fastened so hard
 That you do not wish to loosen and that I now believe;

- 1785 And þat 3e telle me þat now trwly I pray yow,
For alle þe lufez vpon lyue layne not þe soþe
for gile.”
 Þe knyzt sayde, “Be Sayn Jon,”
And smeþely con he smyle;
- 1790 “In fayth I welde rízt non,
Ne non wil welde þe quile.”
- “Þat is a worde,” quop þat wyzt, “þat worst is of alle;
Bot I am swared for soþe; þat sore me þínkkez.
Kysse me now comly, and I schal cach heþen,
- 1795 I may bot mourne vpon molde, as may þat much louyes.”
Sykande ho sweze doun and semly hym kyssed,
And sipen ho seueres hym fro, and says as ho stondes,
“Now, dere, at þis departyng do me þis ese:
Gif me sumquat of þy gifte, þi gloue if hit were,
- 1800 Pat I may mynne on þe, mon, my mournyng to lassen.”
“Now iwysse,” quop þat wyze, “I wolde I hade here
Þe leuest þing for þy luf þat I in londe welde,
For 3e haf deserued, for soþe, sellyly ofte
More rewarde bi resoun þen I reche myzt;
- 1805 Bot to dele yow for drurye þat dawed bot naked.
Hit is not your honour to haf at þis tyme
A gloue for a garysoun of Gawaynez giftez,
And I am here an erande in erdez vncoupe,
And haue no men wyth no malez with menskful þingez;
- 1810 Pat mislykez me, ladé, for luf at þis tyme;
Iche tolke mon do as he is tan, tas to non ille
ne pine.”
 “Nay, hende of hyze honours,”
 Quop þat lufsum vnder lyne,

1785 And that ye tell me now truly I pray you,
 For all the loves upon life conceal not the truth
 For guile."
 The knight said, "By Saint John,"
 And smoothly did he smile;
 1790 "In faith, I have right none,
 Nor none will have this while."

 "That is a word," quoth that woman, "that worst is of all;
 But I am answered for sooth; that seems painful for me.
 Kiss me now, comely, and I shall creep away,
 1795 I may but mourn upon earth, as maid that much loves."
 Sighing she stooped down and seemly him kissed,
 And then she steps away from him, and says as she stands,
 "Now, dear, at this departing do me this ease:
 Give me something as thy gift, thy glove as it were,
 1800 That I may remember thee, man, my mourning to lessen."
 "Now indeed," quoth that warrior, "I would I had here
 The dearest thing for thy love that I in this land possess,
 For ye have deserved, for sooth, awesomely often
 More reward by reason than I could reckon;
 1805 But to give you for love what would avail but little.
 It is not to your honor to have at this time
 A glove for a keepsake of Gawain's gifts,
 And I am here on an errand in earth unknown,
 And have no men with no bags of beautiful things;
 1810 I mislike that, lady, for love at this time;
 Each trooper must do as he is told; take it not as evil
 Nor decline."
 "Nay, courtier of high honors,"
 Quoth that lovely, fair and fine,

1815 "Þaȝ I hade noȝt of youreȝ,
 ȝet schulde ȝe haue of myne."

 Ho raȝt hym a riche rynk of red golde werkeȝ,
 Wyth a starande ston stondande alofte
 Þat bere blusschande bemeȝ as þe bryȝt sunne;
1820 Wyt ȝe wel, hit watȝ worth wele ful hoge.
 Bot þe renk hit renayed, and redyly he sayde,
 "I wil no gifteȝ, for Gode, my gay, at þis tyme;
 I haf none yow to norne, ne noȝt wyl I take."
 Ho bede hit hym ful bysily, and he hir bode wernes,
1825 And swere swyfte by his sothe þat he hit sese nolde,
 And ho soré þat he forsoke, and sayde þerafter,
 "If ȝe renay my rynk, to ryche for hit semeȝ,
 ȝe wolde not so hyȝly halden be to me,
 I schal gif yow my girdel, þat gaynes yow lasse."
1830 Ho laȝt a lace lyȝtly þat leke vmbe hir sydeȝ,
 Knit vpon hir kyrtel vnder þe clere mantyle,
 Gered hit watȝ with grene sylke and with golde schaped,
 Noȝt bot arounde brayden, beten with fyngreȝ;
 And þat ho bede to þe burne, and blypely bisoȝt,
1835 Þaȝ hit vnworpi were, þat he hit take wolde.
 And he nay þat he nolde neghe in no wyse
 Nauþer golde ne garysoun, er God hym grace sende
 To acheue to þe chaunce þat he hade chosen þere.
 "And þerfore, I pray yow, displese yow noȝt,
1840 And letteȝ be your businessse, for I bayþe hit yow neuer
 to graunte;
 I am derely to yow biholde
 Bicause of your sembelaunt,

1815 “Though I have nothing of yours,
 Yet should ye have something of mine.”

 She reached to him a rich ring of red gold works,
 With a shining stone standing aloft
 That bore blushing beams like the bright sun;
1820 Know well it was worth full huge wealth.
 But the rider refused it, and readily he said,
 “I want no gifts, by God, my gay, at this time;
 I have none you to offer, and nothing will I take.”
 She bade him full earnestly, and he her offer rejects,
1825 And swore by his sooth that he would not possess it,
 And she sorrowed that he forsook, and said there-after,
 “If ye refuse my ring, for it seems too rich,
 For ye would not so highly be beholden to me,
 I shall give you my girdle; that profits you less.”
1830 She laid hold of a lace sash wrapped lightly about her sides,
 Knotted upon her girdle under the glowing mantle,
 Adorned it was with green silk and with gold trimmed,
 Everything embroidered, bedazzled by finger-work;
 And that she offered to the brave, and blithely besought,
1835 Though it unworthy were, that he would it take.
 And he said “nay”; he would not come nigh it in any way,
 For neither gold nor treasure, ere God him grace send
 To achieve the adventure that he had chosen there.
 “And there-for, I pray you, be not displeased,
1840 And lay aside your business, for that bargain I will never
 It grant;
 I am deeply to you beholden
 For your kindness ever pleasant,

And euer in hot and colde
1845 To be your trwe seruaunt."

"Now forsake 3e þis silke," sayde þe burde þenne,
"For hit is symple in hitself? And so hit wel semez.
Lo! So hit is littel, and lasse hit is worpy;
Bot who-so knew þe costes þat knit ar þerinne,
1850 He wolde hit prayse at more prys, paraurenture:
For quat gome so is gorde with þis grene lace,
While he hit hade hemely halched aboute,
Per is no hapel vnder heuen tohewe hym þat myzt,
For he myzt not be slayn for slyzt vpon erþe."
1855 Pen kest þe knyzt and hit come to his hert
Hit were a juel for þe jopardé þat hym iugged were:
When he acheued to þe chapel his chek for to fech,
Myzt he haf slypped to be vnslayn, þe slezt were
noble.
þenne he þulged with hir þrepe and þoled hir to speke,
1860 And ho bere on hym þe belt and bede hit hym swyþe,
And he granted and hym gafe with a goud wyll
And bisozt hym, for hir sake, disceuer hit neuer,
Bot to lelly layne fro hir lorde; þe leude hym acordez
Pat neuer wyze schulde hit wyt, iwysse, bot þay twayne
1865 for nozte;
He þonkked hir oft ful swyþe,
Ful þro with hert and þozt.
Bi þat on þrynne syþe
Ho hatz kyst þe knyzt so tozt.
1870 Thenne lachchez ho hir leue, and leuez hym þere,
For more myrþe of þat mon mozt ho not gete.

And swear ever in hot or cold
1845 To be your true servant."

"Now forsake ye this silk," said the sweet lady then,
"For it is simple in itself? And so it well seems.
Lo! It is so little, and less is it worth;
But whosoever knew the qualities that are knitted there-in,
1850 He would it appraise at greater price, perchance:
Whatever gallant is girt with this green lace,
So long as he has it neatly fastened about,
There is no horseman under heaven to hew him that could,
For he can not be slain by any strategem upon earth."
1855 Then considered the knight, and it came to his heart
It would be a jewel for the jeopardy adjudged to him:
When he arrived at the chapel his fortune for to fetch,
Might he slip away and be unslain, the strategem would be
noble.
Then he was patient with her speech and suffered her to speak,
1860 And she bore to him the belt and brought it to him swiftly
And he granted and she gave it with a good will
And besought him, for her sake, discover it never,
But loyally conceal it from her lord; the liegeman agrees
That never creature should it know, indeed, but those two
1865 For aught;
He thanked her in speeches refined,
Earnestly with heart and thought.
By then, the third time,
She has kissed the knight she caught.
1870 Then she takes her leave, and leaves him there,
For more mirth of that man could she not get.

- When ho watȝ gon, Sir Gawayn gereȝ hym sone,
 Rises and riches hym in araye noble,
 Lays vp þe luf-lace þe lady hym raȝt,
 1875 Hid hit ful holdely, þer he hit eft fonde.
 Syþen cheuely to þe chapel choses he þe waye,
 Preuély aproched to a prest, and prayed hym þere
 þat he wolde lyste his lyf and lern hym better
 How his sawle schulde be saued when he schuld seye heþen.
 1880 þere he schrof hym schyrly and schewed his mysdedeȝ,
 Of þe more and þe mynne, and merci besecheȝ,
 And of absolucioun he on þe segge calles;
 And he asoyled hym surely and sette hym so clene
 As Domeȝday schulde haf ben diȝt on þe morn.
 1885 And syþen he mace hym as mery among þe fre ladyes,
 With comlych caroles and alle kynnes ioie,
 As neuer he did bot þat daye, to þe derk nyȝt,
 with blys.
 Vche mon hade daynté þare
 1890 Of hym, and sayde, “lwyse,
 þus myry he watȝ neuer are,
 Syn he com hider, er þis.”
- Now hym lenge in þat lee, þer luf hym bityde!
 ȝet is þe lorde on þe launde ledande his gomnes.
 1895 He hatȝ forfaren þis fox þat he folȝed longe;
 As he sprent ouer a spenne to spye þe schrewe,
 þer as he herd þe howndes þat hasted hym swyþe,
 Renaud com richchande þurȝ a roȝe greue,
 And alle þe rabel in a res ryȝt at his heleȝ.
 1900 þe wyȝe watȝ war of þe wylde, and warly abides,
 And braydeȝ out þe bryȝt bronde, and at þe best casteȝ.

- When she was gone, Sir Gawain readies himself soon,
 Rises and arrays him in noble raiment,
 Stows away the love-sash the lady him gave,
 1875 Hid it full carefully, where he could later find it.
 Then quickly to the chapel chooses he the way,
 Privily approached a priest, and prayed him there
 That he would listen to his life and learn him better
 How his soul should be saved when he set out hence.
 1880 There he confessed him completely and showed his misdeeds,
 Of the mortal and the lesser, and mercy beseeches,
 And for absolution he on the priest calls;
 And he absolved him surely and set him as clean
 As if Doomsday had been destined to dawn on the morn.
 1885 And then he makes him as merry among the fair ladies,
 With comely carols and all kinds of joy,
 As never he did before that day, to the dark night,
 With bliss.
 Each man had pleasure the more
 1890 Of him, and said, "Sooth it is:
 Thus merry was he never before
 Since he came here, ere this."
- Now let him linger in that place, where love him betides!
 Yet is the lord on the land leading his gallants.
 1895 He has killed this fox that he followed long;
 As he sprang over a hedge to espy the scamp,
 Where he heard the hounds that hastened to him swiftly,
 Reynard came rushing through a rough grove,
 And all the rabble in a rush right at his heels.
 1900 The warrior was aware of the wild, and warily abides,
 And brandishes the bright sword, and at the beast strikes.

And he schunt for þe scharp, and schulde haf arered;
 A rach rapes hym to, ryzt er he myzt,
 And ryzt bifore þe hors fete þay fel on hym alle,
 1905 And worried me þis wyly wyth a wroth noyse.
 Þe lorde lyzteȝ bilyue, and lacheȝ hym sone,
 Rased hym ful radly out of þe rach mouþes,
 Haldeȝ heȝe ouer his hede, haloweȝ faste,
 And þer bayen hym mony brap houndeȝ.
 1910 Huntis hyȝed hem þeder with horneȝ ful mony,
 Ay rechatande aryzt til þay þe renk seȝen.
 Bi þat watȝ comen his compeyny noble,
 Alle þat euer ber bugle blowed at ones,
 And alle þise oþer halowed þat hade no hornes;
 1915 Hit watȝ þe myriest mute þat euer men herde,
 Þe rich rurd þat þer watȝ raysed for Renaude saule
 with lote.
 Hor houndeȝ þay þer rewarde;
 Her hedeȝ þay fawne and frote;
 1920 And syþen þay tan Reynarde,
 And tyruen of his cote.

And þenne þay helden to home, for hit watȝ niȝ nyzt,
 Strakande ful stoutly in hor store horneȝ.
 Þe lorde is lyzt at þe laste at hys lef home,
 1925 Fyndeȝ fire vpon flet, þe freke þer-byside,
 Sir Gawayn þe gode, þat glad watȝ withalle,
 Among þe ladies for luf he ladde much ioȝe;
 He were a bleaunt of blwe þat bradde to þe erþe,
 His surkot semed hym wel þat softe watȝ forred,

And he shuns the sharp, and should have escaped;
 A hound rushes him to, right ere he might go,
 And right before the horse's feet they fell on him all,
 1905 And bit into this wily with a wrathful noise.
 The lord alights quickly, and lays hold of him soon,
 Snatched him full rapidly out of the hounds' mouths,
 Holds him high over his head, halloos fast,
 And there bay at him many brave hounds.
 1910 Huntsman hurried them thither with horns full many,
 Aye blowing "Taken!" rightly till they the rider see.
 By that time was come his company noble,
 All that ever bore bugle blew at once,
 And all these other hallooed that had no horns;
 1915 It was the happiest pack of hounds that ever men heard,
 The rich roar that there was raised for Reynard's soul
 From throats.
 Their hounds they there reward;
 Their heads they fondle and dote;
 1920 And then they take Reynard,
 And tear off his coat.

And then they headed home, for it was nigh night,
 Sounding full stoutly in their strong horns.
 The lord is alighted at last at his beloved home,
 1925 Finds fire upon floor, the fighter there-beside,
 Sir Gawain the good, that glad was withal,
 Among the ladies for love he led much joy;
 He bore a mantle of blue that brushed the earth,
 His surcoat became him well that softly was furred,

- 1930 And his hode of þat ilke hinged on his schulder,
 Blande al of blaunner were boþe al aboute.
 He metez me þis godmon inmyddeȝ þe flore,
 And al with gomen he hym gret, and goudly he sayde,
 "I schal fylle vpon fyrst oure forwardeȝ nouþe,
- 1935 þat we spedly han spoken, þer spared watȝ no drynk."
 Pen acoles he þe knyȝt and kysses hym þryes,
 As sauerly and sadly as he hem sette couþe.
 "Bi Kryst," quop þat oþer knyȝt, "ȝe cach much sele
 In cheuisaunce of þis chaffer, ȝif ȝe hade goud chepeȝ."
- 1940 "ȝe, of þe chepe no charg," quop chefly þat oþer,
 As is pertly payed þe chepeȝ þat I aȝte."
 "Mary," quop þat oþer mon, "myn is bihynde,
 For I haf hunted al þis day, and noȝt haf I geten
 Bot þis foule fox felle — þe fende haf þe godeȝ! —
- 1945 And þat is ful pore for to pay for suche prys þinges
 As ȝe haf þryȝt me here þro, suche þre cosses
 so gode."
 "Inoȝ," quop Sir Gawayn,
 "I þonk yow, bi þe rode,"
- 1950 And how þe fox watȝ slayn
 He tolde hym as þay stode.
- With merþe and mynstralsye, with metez at hor wyllle,
 Pay maden as mery as any men moȝten,
 With lazyne of ladies, with loteȝ of bordes.
- 1955 Gawayn and þe godemon so glad were þay boþe
 Bot if þe douthe had doted, oþer dronken ben oþer.
 Boþe þe mon and þe meyny maden mony iapeȝ,

1930 And his hood of that same hanged on his shoulder,
 Bedecked all of ermine were both all about.
 He meets this house-holder in the middle of the floor,
 And all with gladness he him greeted, and goodly he said,
 "Now I shall first fulfill our agreement,
 1935 That we speedily spoke, where spared was no drink."
 Then embraces he the knight and kisses him thrice,
 As sweetly and seriously as he knew how to set them.
 "By Christ," quoth that other knight, "ye catch much joy
 In your profits in this business, if ye got a good price."
 1940 "Yea, of the price no bother," quoth promptly that other,
 "Since the prices that I owed are fully paid."
 "Mary," quoth that other man, "my account is behind,
 For I have hunted all this day, and naught have I got
 But this foul fox fur —the fiend have the profits!—
 1945 And that is full poor for to pay for such prized things
 As ye have pressed on me here earnestly, such three kisses
 So good."
 "Enough," quoth Sir Gawain,
 "I thank you, by the rood,"
 1950 And how the fox was slain
 He told him as they stood.

With mirth and minstrelsy, with meals when they wanted,
 They made as merry as any men could
 With laughing of ladies, with light wit and jests.
 1955 Gawain and the good man so glad were they both
 As if the court had gone crazy, or was drunk.
 Both the man and the courtiers made many jokes,

- Til þe sesoun watz segen þat þay seuer moste;
 Burnez to hor bedde behoued at þe laste.
- 1960 Penne lozly his leue at þe lorde fyrst
 Fochcheȝ þis fre mon, and fayre he hym þonkkeȝ:
 "Of such a selly soiorne as I haf hade here,
 Your honour at þis hyȝe fest, þe Hyȝe Kyng yow zelde!
 I zef yow me for on of youreȝ, if yowreself lykeȝ,
- 1965 For I mot nedes, as ȝe wot, meue to-morne,
 And ȝe me take sum tolke to teche, as ȝe hyȝt,
 Þe gate to þe Grene Chapel, as God wyl me suffer
 To dele on Nw ȝereȝ day þe dome of my wyrdes."
 "In god fayþe," quoth þe godmon, "wyth a goud wylle
- 1970 Al þat euer I yow hyȝt halde schal I redé."
 Per asyngnes he a seruaunt to sett hym in þe waye,
 And coundue hym by þe downez, þat he no drechch had,
 For to ferk þurȝ þe fryth and fare at þe gaynest
 bi greue.
- 1975 Þe lorde Gawayn con þonk,
 (Such worship he wolde hym weue),
 Þen at þo ladyeȝ wlonk
 Þe knyȝt hatȝ tan his leue.
- With care and wyth kyssyng he carppeȝ hem tille,
 1980 And fele þryuande þonkkeȝ he þrat hom to haue,
 And þay zelden hym azayn ȝeþly þat ilk;
 Pay bikende hym to Kryst with ful colde sykyngȝeȝ.
 Syþen fro þe meyny he menskly departes;
 Vche mon þat he mette, he made hem a þonke
- 1985 For his seruise and his solace and his sere pyne,
 Pat þay wyth busynes had ben aboute hym to serue;

Till the season was seen that they must separate;
 Braves to their beds it behooved at the last.
 1960 Then humbly his leave from the lord first
 Fetches this fine man, and fair he him thanks:
 "For such a splendid sojourn as I have had here,
 The honor at this high feast, the High King you reward!
 I give you me to be your servant, if yourself it pleases,
 1965 For I must by necessity, as ye know, leave in the morn,
 If ye me give some trooper to teach me, as ye promised,
 The way to the Green Chapel, if God will allow me
 To do on New Year's day the decree of my fate."
 "In good faith," quoth the good man, "with a good will
 1970 All that ever I promised you I shall readily hold."
 There he assigns him a servant to set him in the way,
 And conduct him by the downs, that he no trouble have,
 For to travel through the forest and fare the most direct way
 To achieve.
 1975 Gawain the lord did thank
 (Much worship there-in he did weave),
 Then from those ladies of rank
 The knight has taken his leave.

 With sorrow and with kissing he converses with them,
 1980 And full many hearty thanks he urged them to have,
 And they yield him in turn eagerly the same;
 They commend him to Christ with full cold sighs.
 Then from the court he courteously departs;
 Each man that he met, he gave him a thank
 1985 For his service, his amusement, and his special pains,
 That they had been busy with to serve about him;

And vche segge as soré to seuer with hym þere
 As þay hade wonde worpyly with þat wlonk euer.
 Þen with ledes and lyzt he watȝ ladde to his chambre
 1990 And blyþely broȝt to his bedde to be at his rest.
 ȝif he ne slepe soundyly say ne dar I,
 For he hade muche on þe morn to mynne, ȝif he wolde,
 in þoȝt.
 Let hym lyȝe þere stille,
 1995 He hatȝ nere þat he soȝt;
 And ȝe wyl a whyle be styllle
 I schal telle yow how þay wroȝt.

And each stalwart as sorry to separate from him there
As if they had dwelt worthily with that noble forever.
Then by lads and light he was led to his chamber
1990 And blithely brought to his bed to be at his rest.
If he slept soundly I dare not say,
For he had much on the morn to muse upon, if he would,
In thought.
Let him lie there still,
1995 He has nearly what he sought;
And if ye will a while be still
I shall tell you how they wrought.

- Now neȝez þe Nw ȝere, and þe nyȝt passeȝ,
 Þe day dryueȝ to þe derk, as Dryȝtyn biddeȝ;
 2000 Bot wylde wedereȝ of þe worlde wakned þeroute,
 Clowdes kesten kenly þe colde to þe erþe,
 Wyth nyȝe innoghe of þe norþe, þe naked to tene;
 Þe snawe snitered ful snart, þat snayped þe wylde.
 Þe werbelande wynde wapped fro þe hyȝe,
 2005 And drof vche dale ful of dryftes ful grete.
 Þe leude lystened ful wel þat leȝ in his bedde;
 Þaȝ he lowkeȝ his liddeȝ, ful lyttel he slepes;
 Bi vch kok þat crue he knwe wel þe steuen.
 Deliuerly he dressed vp, er þe day sprengeȝ,
 2010 For þere watȝ lyȝt of a laumpe þat lemed in his chambre;
 He called to his chamberlayn, þat cofly hym swared,
 And bede hym bryng hym his bruny and his blonk sadel;
 Þat oþer ferkeȝ hym vp and fecheȝ hym his wedeȝ,
 And grayþeȝ me Sir Gawayn vpon a grett wyse.
 2015 Fyrst he clad hym in his cloþeȝ þe colde for to were,
 And syþen his oþer harnays, þat holdely watȝ keped,
 Boþe his paunce and his plateȝ, piked ful clene,
 Þe ryngȝ rokked of þe roust of his riche bruny;
 And al watȝ fresch as vpon fyrst, and he watȝ fayn þenne
 2020 to þonk;
 He hade vpon vche pece,
 Wypped ful wel and wlonk;
 Þe gayest into Grece,
 Þe burne bede bryng his blonk.
- 2025 Whyle þe wlonkest wedes he warp on hymselfen:
 His cote wyth þe conysaunce of þe clere werkeȝ
 Ennurned vpon veluet, vertuus stoneȝ

Now nighs the New Year, and the night passes,
 The day drives out the dark, as the Dear Lord commands;
 2000 But wild weathers of the world awakened outside,
 Clouds cast keenly the cold to the earth,
 With well enough of the north wind, naked flesh to torment;
 The snow shivered full sharply and snapped at wild beasts.
 The warbling wind whipped down from the heights
 2005 And drove each dale full of drifts full great.
 The liegeman listened right well who lay in his bed;
 Though he locks his lids, very little he sleeps;
 By each cock that crowed he knew well the hour.
 Directly he was up and dressed, ere the day sprang,
 2010 For there was light of a lamp that illumined his chamber;
 He called to his servant, who quickly him answered,
 And bade him bring his armor and saddle his bronc;
 That other hurries fast and fetches him his garments,
 And gets Sir Gawain ready in a goodly manner.
 2015 First he clad him in his clothes the cold to ward off,
 And then his other harness, that honorably was kept,
 His paunch-armor and his plates, polished full bright,
 The rings rubbed clean of the rust from his rich mail;
 And all fresh as when first new, and he now fit
 2020 To proceed.
 He put on every piece,
 With care and speed,
 The gayest from here to Greece;
 The brave bade bring his steed.
 2025 Meanwhile in the most worthy weeds he wrapped himself:
 His coat with the heraldic arms in the clever works
 Adorning the velvet, very powerful jewels

Aboute beten and bounden, enbrauded semeȝ,
 And fayre furred withinne wyth fayre pelures.
 2030 ȝet laft he not þe lace, þe ladiez gifte;
 þat forgat not Gawayn for gode of hymself.
 Bi he hade belted þe bronde vpon his balȝe haunches,
 þenn dressed he his drurye double hym aboute,
 Swyþe sweþled vmbȝe his swange swetely þat knyȝt
 2035 þe gordel of þe grene silke; þat gay wel bisemed
 Vpon þat ryol red cloþe þat ryche watȝ to schewe.
 Bot wered not þis ilk wyȝe for wele þis gordel,
 For pryde of þe pendaunteȝ, þaȝ polyst þay were,
 And þaȝ þe glyterande golde glent vpon endeȝ,
 2040 Bot for to sauȝe hymself, when suffer hym byhoued,
 To byde bale withoute dabate of bronde hym to were
 oþer knyffe.
 Bi þat þe bolde mon boun
 Wynneȝ þeroute bilyue,
 2045 Alle þe meyny of renoun
 He þonkkeȝ ofte ful ryue.

 Thenne watȝ Gryngolet grayþe, þat gret watȝ and huge,
 And hade ben sojourned sauerly and in a siker wyȝe;
 Hym lyst prik for poynt, þat proude hors þenne.
 2050 þe wyȝe wyneȝ hym to and wyteȝ on his lyre,
 And sayde soberly hymself and by his soth swereȝ:
 “Here is a meyny in þis mote þat on menske þenkkeȝ:
 þe mon hem maynteines, ioȝ mot þay haue;
 þe leue lady on lyue — luf hir bityde;
 2055 ȝif þay for charyté cherysen a gest,
 And halden honour in her honde, þe Hapȝel hem ȝelde

About stitched and sewn, embroidered seams,
 And fair furred inside with fine pelts.
 2030 Yet left he not the lace, the lady's gift;
 That forgot not Gawain for good of himself.
 When he had belted the sword on his brawny haunches,
 Then he draped his love-token double him about,
 Swiftly swaddled round his waist sweetly that knight
 2035 The girdle of green silk; well befitted that gay
 Upon that royal red cloth that rich was to see.
 But this same warrior wore not this girdle for its wealth,
 For pride of the pendants, though polished they were,
 And though the glittering gold gleamed on the ends,
 2040 But for to save himself, when to suffer it him behoved,
 To battle without broadsword himself to defend,
 Nor knife.
 By then the bold was bound
 Quickly unto strife,
 2045 And to that whole court of renown
 Gives thanks to all on life.

Then was Gringolet ready, that great was and huge,
 And had been stabled to his liking and well cared for;
 He wanted the prick of the spur, that proud horse then.
 2050 The warrior wends him to and examines his hide,
 And said soberly to himself and by his sooth swears:
 "There are courtiers in this castle that care for noble customs:
 The man that maintains them, joy may he have;
 And his dear lady on life— may love her betide;
 2055 Since they for charity cherish a guest,
 And hold honor in their hand, the High God reward them,

- Pat haldez þe heuen vpon hyze, and also yow alle!
 And ȝif I myȝt lyf vpon londe lede any quyle,
 I schuld rech yow sum rewarde redyly, if I myȝt."
- 2060 Penn steppez he into stirop and strydez alofte;
 His schalk schewed hym his schelde, on schulder he hit laȝt,
 Gordez to Gryngolet with his gilt heleȝ,
 And he startez on þe ston, stod he no lenger
 to prounce.
- 2065 His habel on hors watȝ þenne,
 Pat bere his spere and launce.
 "Pis kastel to Kryst I kenne:
 He gef hit ay god chaunce."
- 2070 The brygge watȝ brayde down, and þe brode gateȝ
 Vnbarred and born open vpon boþe halue.
 Þe burne blessed hym bilyue, and þe bredeȝ passed,
 Prayses þe porter biforn þe prynce kneled —
 Gef hym God and goud day, þat Gawayn he saue —
 And went on his way with his wyȝe one,
- 2075 Pat schulde teche hym to tourne to þat tene place
 Þer þe ruful race he schulde resayue.
 Pay boȝen bi bonkkeȝ þer boȝez ar bare,
 Pay clomben bi clyffez þer clengeȝ þe colde.
 Þe heuen watȝ vphalt, bot vgly þer-vnder;
- 2080 Mist mugged on þe mor, malt on þe mountez;
 Vch hille hade a hatte, a myst-hakel huge;
 Brokeȝ byled and breke bi bonkkeȝ aboute,
 Schyre schaterande on schoreȝ þer þay down schowued.
 Wela wylle watȝ þe way þer þay bi wod schulden,

He that holds the heaven on high, and also you all!
 And if I might life upon land lead any longer,
 I should render you some reward readily, if I could."
 2060 Then steps he into stirrup and strides aloft;
 His servant showed him his shield, on shoulder he it laid,
 Gives spur to Gringolet with his gilt heels,
 And he starts on the stone, stood he no longer,
 To prance.
 2065 The hero on horse was then,
 That bore his spear and lance.
 "This castle to Christ I commend.
 May He give it always good chance."

 The bridge was brought down, and the broad gates
 2070 Unbarred and borne open upon both sides.
 The brave blessed himself quickly, the planks crossed,
 Praises the porter that before the prince kneeled—
 Gave him God and good day, that Gawain he save—
 And went on his way with his one warrior,
 2075 That should teach him to turn to that terrible place
 Where the rueful blow he had to receive.
 They bound by banks where boughs are bare,
 They climb by cliffs where clings the cold.
 The heaven was up high, but ugly there-under;
 2080 Mist drizzled on the moor, melted on the mountains;
 Each hill had a hat, a huge mantle of mist;
 Brooks boiled and broke by banks about,
 Brightly shattering on shores, where they shot down.
 Well wild was the way where they went by wood.

2085 Til hit watz sone sesoun þat þe sunne ryse
þat tyde.

þay were on a hille ful hyȝe

þe quyte snaw lay bisyde;

þe burne þat rod hym by

2090 Bede his mayster abide.

“For I haf wonnen yow hider, wyȝe, at þis tyme,

And now nar ȝe not fer fro þat note place

þat ȝe han spied and spuryed so specially after;

Bot I schal say yow for soþe, syþen I yow knowe,

2095 And ȝe ar a lede vpon lyue þat I wel louy,

Wolde ȝe worch bi my wytte, ȝe worþed þe better.

þe place þat ȝe prece to ful perelous is halden;

þer woneȝ a wyȝe in þat waste, þe worst vpon erþe,

For he is stiffe and sturne, and to strike louies,

2100 And more he is þen any mon vpon myddelerde,

And his body bigger þen þe best fowre

þat ar in Arþureȝ hous, Hestor, oþer oþer.

He cheuez þat chaunce at þe Chapel Grene:

þer passes non bi þat place so proude in his armes

2105 þat he ne dynges hym to deþe with dynt of his honde;

For he is a mon methles, and mercy non vses,

For be hit chorle oþer chaplayn þat bi þe chapel rydes,

Monk oþer masseprest, oþer any mon elles,

Hym þynk as queme hym to quelle as quyk go hymselfen.

2110 Forþy I say þe, as soþe as ȝe in sadel sitte,

Com ȝe þere, ȝe be kyllled, may þe knyȝt rede;

2085 It was soon the season that the sun rises
 At that tide.
 They were on a hill full high,
 White snow lay them beside;
 The brave that rode him by
 2090 Then bade his master abide.

“For I have won your way hither, warrior, at this time,
 And now are ye not far from that noted place
 That ye have spied about and sought with such special care;
 But I shall say you truly, since well I know you,
 2095 And ye are a lad upon life that I well love,
 Would ye work by my wit, ye would be the better.
 The place that ye press to full perilous is held;
 A warrior dwells in that wasteland, the worst on earth,
 For he is stout and stern, and loves to strike,
 2100 And mightier is he than any man upon middle-earth,
 And his body bigger than the best four
 That are in Arthur’s house, Hector or other.
 He keeps the custom at the Green Chapel:
 There passes none by that place so proud in his arms
 2105 That he does not deal him death by dint of his hand;
 For he is a man without measure, and no mercy uses,
 For be it churl or chaplain that by the chapel rides,
 Monk or mass-priest, or any man else,
 He thinks it as good to kill him as for himself to live.
 2110 Therefore I say this, as surely as ye in saddle sit,
 Come ye there, ye be killed, if that knight has his way;

Trawe 3e me þat trwely: þa3 3e had twenty lyues
to spende.

He hat3 wonyd here ful zore;

2115 On bent much baret bende,
Azayn his dyntez sore
3e may not yow defende.

“Forþy, goude Sir Gawayn, let þe come one,
And got3 away sum oþer gate, vpon Goddez halue!
2120 Cayrez bi sum oþer kyth, þer Kryst mot yow spede,
And I schal hy3 me hom azayn, and hete yow fyrre
þat I schal swere bi God and alle his gode hal3ez,
As help me God and þe halydam, and oþez innoghe,

þat I schal lelly yow layne, and lance neuer tale
2125 þat euer 3e fondet to fle for freke þat I wyst.”
“Grant merci,” quop Gawayn, and gruchyng he sayde:
“Wel worth þe, wy3e, þat woldez my gode,
And þat lelly me layne I leue wel þou woldez.
Bot helde þou hit neuer so holde, and I here passed,
2130 Founded for ferde for to fle, in fourme þat þou telle3,
I were a kny3t kowarde; I my3t not be excused.
Bot I wyl to þe chapel, for chaunce þat may falle,
And talk wyth þat ilk tulk þe tale þat me lyste,
Worþe hit wele oþer wo, as þe wyrde lykez

2135 hit hafe.

þa3e he be a sturn knape
To stiztel, and stad with staue,
Ful wel con Dry3tyn schape
His seruaunte3 for to saue.”

Trust ye me truly; though ye had twenty lives

To spend.

He has dwelt here since full yore;

2115 On earth many met their end

Against him battling full sore;

Ye cannot you defend.

"Therefore, good Sir Gawain, let that gallant alone,

And go away some other way, by God's wounds!

2120 Cross some other country, where Christ may you help,

And I shall hasten me home again, and assure you honestly

That I shall swear by God and all his goodly saints,

As help me God, and the holy relics, and many good oaths,

That I shall loyally lie for you, and relate never a tale

2125 That ever ye fled for fear from fighter that I knew."

"Great thanks," quoth Gawain, and grudgingly he said:

"Well may thou prosper, warrior, who wishes me good,

And loyally to lie for me I believe well thou wouldst.

But held thou it never so hidden, and I here slipped away,

2130 Fared for fear to flee, in form that thou tell,

I would be a knight coward; I could not be excused.

But I will go to the chapel, whatever chance may befall,

And talk with that same knight of whatever tale I want,

Be it weal or woe, however fate will

2135 Behave.

Though he be stern in fray,

With a club to daunt the brave,

The dear Lord can find a way

His servants for to save."

- 2140 "Mary!" quop þat oþer mon, "now þou so much spellez,
 Pat þou wylt þyn awen nye nyme to þyseluen,
 And þe lyst lese þy lyf, þe lette I ne kepe.
 Haf here þi helme on þy hede, þi spere in þi honde,
 And ryde me doun þis ilk rake bi zon rokke syde,
 2145 Til þou be brogt to þe boþem of þe brem valay;
 Penne loke a littel on þe launde, on þi lyfte honde,
 And þou schal se in þat slade þe self chapel,
 And þe borelych burne on bent þat hit kepez.
 Now farez wel, on Godez half, Gawayn þe noble!
 2150 For alle þe golde vpon grounde I nolde go wyth þe,
 Ne bere þe felazschip þurz þis fryth on fote fyrre."
 Bi þat þe wyze in þe wod wendeþ his brydel,
 Hit þe hors with þe helez as harde as he myzt,
 Lepez hym ouer þe launde, and leuez þe knyzt þere
 2155 al one.
 "Bi Goddez self," quop Gawayn,
 "I wyl nauþer grete ne grone:
 To Goddez wylle I am ful bayn,
 And to hym I haf me tone."
- 2160 Thenne gyrdez he to Gryngolet, and gederez þe rake,
 Schowuez in bi a schore at a schaze syde,
 Rideþ þurz þe roze bonk ryzt to þe dale;
 And þenne he wayted hym aboute, and wylde hit hym þozt,
 And seze no syngne of resette bisydeþ nowhere,
 2165 Bot hyze bonkkez and brent vpon boþe halue,
 And ruze knokled knarrez with knorned stoneþ;
 Þe skwez of þe scowtes skayned hym þozt.
 Penne he houed, and wythhylde his hors at þat tyde,
 And ofte chaunged his cher þe chapel to seche:

2140 "Mary!" quoth that other man, "now thou so much speakest,
 That thou wilt thine own bane bring on thyself,
 If thou want to lose thy life, I look not to prevent thee.
 Have here thy helmet on thy head, thy spear in thy hand,
 And ride thee down this same road by yon rocky side,
 2145 Till thou be brought to the bottom of the broad valley;
 Then look a little at the open land, on thy left hand,
 And thou shalt see in that glade that same chapel,
 And the one brave in battle that there thee bides.
 Now farewell, by God's wounds, Gawain the noble!
 2150 For all the gold upon ground I would not go with thee,
 Nor bear thee fellowship through this forest one foot further."
 With that the warrior in the wood wrenches his bridle,
 Hit the horse with his heels as hard as he could,
 Leaps him over the land, and leaves the knight there
 2155 Alone.
 "By God's self," quoth Gawain,
 "I will neither gripe nor groan;
 Of God's will I am certain,
 And I know that I am His own."

 2160 Then gives he spur to Gringolet, and gets again the path,
 Strikes in by a shore at a shining wood's side,
 Rides through the rough bank right to the dale;
 And then he watched about him and wild he thought it,
 And saw no sign of refuge nowhere beside,
 2165 But high banks and steep upon both sides,
 And rough knobs gnarled with twisted stones;
 The clouds seemed to graze on the clustered rocks.
 Then he halted, and held back his horse at that tide,
 And often searched around the chapel to seek:

- 2170 He sez non suche in no syde, and selly hym þoȝt,
 Saue, a lyttel on a launde, a lawe as hit were;
 A balȝ berȝ bi a bonke þe brymme bysyde,
 Bi a forȝ of a flode þat ferked þare;
 Þe borne blubred þerinne as hit boyled hade.
- 2175 Þe knyȝt kacheȝ his caple, and com to þe lawe,
 Liȝeȝ doun luflyly, and at a lynde tacheȝ
 Þe rayne and his riche with a roȝe braunche.
 Penne he boȝeȝ to þe berȝe, aboute hit he walkeȝ,
 Debatande with hymself quat hit be myȝt.
- 2180 Hit hade a hole on þe ende and on ayȝer syde,
 And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere,
 And al watȝ holȝ inwith, nobot an olde caue,
 Or a creuisse of an olde cragge, he couȝe hit noȝt deme
 with spelle.
- 2185 We! Lorde," quop þe gentyle knyȝt,
 "Wheȝer þis be þe Grene Chapelle?
 Here myȝt aboute mydnyȝt
 Þe dele his matynnes telle!
- "Now iwysse," quop Wowayn, "wysty is here;
 2190 Þis oritore is vgly, with erbeȝ ouergrowen;
 Wel bisemeȝ þe wyȝe wruxled in grene
 Dele here his deuocioun on þe deueleȝ wyse.
 Now I fele hit is þe fende, in my fyue wytteȝ,
 Þat hatȝ stoken me þis steuen to strye me here.
- 2195 Þis is a chapel of meschaunce, þat chekke hit bytyde!
 Hit is þe corsesdest kyrk þat euer I com inne!"
 With heȝe helme on his hede, his launce in his honde,
 He romeȝ vp to þe roffe of þe roȝe woneȝ.

- 2170 He saw none such on any side, and strange it seemed to him,
 Except a little rise on a lawn, a knoll as it were;
 A smooth mound by a bank beside the water's brim,
 By a waterfall of a flood that foamed up there;
 The brook bubbled there-in as if it were boiling.
- 2175 The knight spurs his courser, and comes to the mound,
 Lights down lively, and at a linden attaches
 The reins of his steed to a rough branch.
 Then he bounds to the mound; about it he walks,
 Debating with himself what it might be.
- 2180 It had a hole on the end and on either side,
 And overgrown with grass on the ground everywhere,
 And all was hollow within, naught but an old cave,
 Or a crevice of an old crag, he could not say which
 It befell.
- 2185 "Why! Lord," quoth the gentle knight,
 "Can this be the Green Chapel?
 Here might about midnight
 The devil his matins tell!"
- "Now indeed," quoth Wawain, "it is wild here;
 2190 This oratory is ugly, with weeds overgrown;
 Well befits the warrior wrapped in green
 To do here his devotion in the devil's way.
 Now I feel it is the fiend, in my five wits,
 That has doomed me on this date to destroy me here.
- 2195 This is a chapel of misfortune; may mischief betide it!
 It is the cursedest church that I ever came in!"
 With high helmet on his head, his lance in his hand,
 He roams up to the roof of the rough dwelling.

Pene herde he of þat hyȝe hil, in a harde roche
 2200 Bizonde þe broke, in a bonk, a wonder breme noyse,
 Quat! hit clatered in þe clyff, as hit cleue schulde,
 As one vpon a gryndelston hade grounden a syþe.
 What! hit wharred and whette, as water at a mulne;
 What! hit rusched and ronge, rawþe to here.
 2205 Penne "Bi Godde," quop Gawayn, "þat gere, as I trowe,
 Is ryched at þe reuerence me, renk, to mete
 bi rote.
 Let God worche. We, loo!
 Hit helppez me not a mote.
 2210 My lif þaȝ I forgoo,
 Drede dotȝ me no lote."

Thenne þe knyȝt con calle ful hyȝe:
 "Who stiztleȝ in þis sted me steuen to holde?
 For now is gode Gawayn goande ryȝt here.
 2215 If any wyȝe oȝt wyl, wynne hider fast,
 Oþer now oþer neuer, his nedeȝ to spede."
 "Abyde," quop on on þe bonke abouen ouer his hede,
 "And þou schal haf al in hast þat I þe hyȝt ones."
 ȝet he rusched on þat rurde rapely a þrowe
 2220 And wyth quettyng awharf, er he wolde lyȝt;
 And syþen he keuereȝ bi a cragge, and comeȝ of a hole,
 Whyrlande out of a wro wyth a felle weppen,
 A Deneȝ ax nwe dyȝt, þe dynt with to ȝelde,
 With a borelych bytte bende by þe halme,
 2225 Fyled in a fylor, fowre fote large.
 Hit watȝ no lasse bi þat lace þat lemed ful bryȝt
 And þe gome in þe grene gered as fyrst,
 Boþe þe lyre and þe leggez, lokkez and berde,

Then heard he from that high hill, on a hard rock
 2200 Beyond the brook, in a bank, a wondrous big noise,
 Whoosh! It clattered in the cliff, as if it cleave should,
 As if one upon a grindstone had ground a scythe.
 Whoosh! It whirred and whirled, as water at a mill;
 Whoosh! It rushed and rang, rueful to hear.
 2205 Then "By God," quoth Gawain, "that gear, as I believe,
 Is readied to honor me, to meet with due ritual the rider
 Coming here.
 Let God do as He will. Why, lo!
 No help for me will appear.
 2210 My life though I forgo
 No noise will make me fear."

 Then the knight did call full loud:
 "Who stands in this spot my set date to keep?
 For now is good Gawain going right here.
 2215 If any warrior wants anything, let him wend hither fast,
 Either now or never, his errand to achieve."
 "Abide," quoth one on the bank above, over his head,
 "And thou shalt have promptly what I promised thee once."
 Yet he raised that roaring noise longer for a while
 2220 And with whetting continued, ere he would alight;
 And then he climbed down by a crag, and came from a hole,
 Whirling out of a crevice with a fierce weapon,
 A Danish ax newly honed, with which to yield the dint,
 With a massive blade curving back toward the handle,
 2225 Filed sharp by a whetstone, four foot long.
 It was no less than that lace sash that gleamed full bright,
 And the gallant in the green garbed as at first,
 Both the face and the legs, locks and beard,

- Saue þat fayre on his fote he foundez on þe erþe,
 2230 Sette þe stele to þe stone, and stalked bysyde.
 When he wan to þe watter, þer he wade nolde,
 He hypped ouer on hys ax, and orpedly strydez,
 Bremly broþe on a bent þat brode wat3 aboute,
 on snawe.
- 2235 Sir Gawayn þe knyzt con mete;
 He ne lutte hym nopþyng lowe.
 Þat oþer sayde, "Now, sir swete,
 Of steuen mon may þe trowe."
- "Gawayn," quop þat grene gome, "God þe mot loke!
 2240 Iwysse þou art welcom, wyze, to my place,
 And þou hat3 tymed þi trauayl as truee mon schulde,
 And þou knowez þe couenaunte3 kest vus bytwene:
 At þis tyme twelmonyth þou toke þat þe falled,
 And I schulde at þis Nwe 3ere zeply þe quyte.
- 2245 And we ar in þis valay verayly oure one;
 Here ar no renkes vs to rydde, rele as vus like3.
 Haf þy helme of þy hede, and haf here þy pay.
 Busk no more debate þen I þe bede þenne
 When þou wypped of my hede at a wap one."
- 2250 "Nay, bi God," quop Gawayn, "þat me gost lante,
 I schal gruch þe no grwe for grem þat falle3.
 Bot styztel þe vpon on strok, and I schal stonde styлле
 And warp þe no wernyng to worch as þe lyke3,
 nowhare."
- 2255 He lened with þe nek, and lutte,
 And schewed þat schyre al bare,
 And lette as he nozt dutte;
 For drede he wolde not dare.

Save that fair on his foot he fared on the earth,
 2230 Set the steel to the stone, and stalked beside.
 When he got to the water, where he would not wade,
 He vaulted over on his ax and vigorously strides,
 Furiously fierce on a field that flecked was about,
 With snow.
 2235 Sir Gawain the knight did meet;
 He in no way bowed him low.
 That other said, "Now, sir sweet,
 That thou keepest thy word we know."

 "Gawain," quoth that green gallant, "May God guide thee!
 2240 Indeed thou art welcome, warrior, to my place,
 And hast timed thy travail as true man should,
 And thou knowest the covenants cast us between:
 At this time twelvemonth thou took what thee befell,
 And I should at this New Year surely thee requite.
 2245 And we are in this valley verily ourselves alone;
 Here are no referees to interfere; we may rule us as we like.
 Have thy helmet off thy head, and have here thy pay.
 Make no more debate than I brought thee then
 When thou whipped off my head with one single whack."
 2250 "Nay," quoth Gawain, "by God Who gave me soul,
 I shall grudge thee not a bit for any grief that may befall.
 But be satisfied with one stroke, and I shall stand still
 And willingly I warrant to work as thou please
 Anywhere."
 2255 He leaned with the neck, to bow,
 And showed that flesh all bare,
 Let on that he naught feared now;
 For dread he would not despair.

- Then þe gome in þe grene grayþed hym swyþe,
 2260 Gedereȝ vp hys grymme tole Gawayn to smyte;
 With alle þe bur in his body he ber hit on lofte,
 Munt as maȝtyly as marre hym he wolde;
 Hade hit dryuen adoun as dreg as he atled,
 Per hade ben ded of his dynt þat doȝty watȝ euer.
- 2265 Bot Gawayn on þat giserne glyfte hym bysyde,
 As hit com glydande adoun on glode hym to schende,
 And schranke a lytel with þe schulderes for þe scharp yrne.
 Pat oper schalk wyth a schunt þe schene wythhaldeȝ,
 And þenne repreued he þe prynce with mony prowde wordeȝ:
- 2270 "Þou art not Gawayn," quop þe gome, "þat is so goud halden,
 Pat neuer arȝed for no here by hylle ne be vale,
 And now þou fles for ferde er þou fele harmeȝ!
 Such cowardise of þat knyȝt cowþe I neuer here.
 Nawþer fyked I ne flaȝe, freke, quen þou myntest,
- 2275 Ne kest no kaulacion in kyngeȝ hous Arthor.
 My hede flaȝ to my fote, and ȝet flaȝ I neuer;
 And þou, er any harme hent, arȝeȝ in hert;
 Wherefore þe better burne me burde be called
 þerfore."
- 2280 Quop Gawayn, "I schunt oneȝ,
 And so wyl I no more;
 Bot þaȝ my hede falle on þe stoneȝ,
 I con not hit restore.
- "Bot busk, burne, bi þi fayth, and bryng me to þe poynt.
 2285 Dele to me my destiné, and do hit out of honde,
 For I schal stonde þe a strok, and start no more
 Til þyn ax haue me hitte. Haf here my trawþe."
 "Haf at þe þenne!" quop þat oper, and heueȝ hit alofte,

Then the gallant in the green got himself ready,
 2260 Gathers up his grim tool Gawain to smite;
 With all the strength in his body he bore it aloft,
 Swung as mightily as if to destroy him he would;
 Had it driven down as deadly as he pretended,
 There had been dead of his dint he that doughty was ever.
 2265 But Gawain on that great ax glanced sideways,
 As it came crashing down to the ground to destroy him,
 And he shrank a little with the shoulders from the sharp iron.
 That other chevalier shifts and the shining blade withholds,
 And then reproved he the prince with many proud words:
 2270 "Thou art not Gawain," quoth the gallant, "who is so good held,
 That was never frightened by any host by hill nor by vale,
 And now thou flinchest for fear ere thou feel harms!
 Such cowardice of that knight could I never hear.
 I neither flinched nor fled, fighter, when thou swung,
 2275 Nor cast any quibbles in the king's house of Arthur.
 My head flew to my foot, and yet fled I never;
 And thou, ere any harm is had, art horrified in heart;
 Wherefore the better battler I ought to be called
 Therefore."
 2280 Quoth Gawain, "I flinched once alone,
 And so will I no more;
 But though my head fall on the stone,
 I cannot it restore.
 "But get ready, battler, by thy faith, and bring me to the point.
 2285 Deal to me my destiny, and do it out of hand,
 For I shall stand thee one stroke, and stir no more
 Till thine ax have me hit. Have here my troth!"
 "Have at thee then!" quoth that other, and heaves it aloft,

- And waytez as wroþely as he wode were.
- 2290 He mynteȝ at hym maȝtyly, bot not þe mon rynez,
 Withhelde heterly his honde, er hit hurt myȝt.
 Gawayn grayþely hit bydeȝ, and glent with no membre,
 Bot stode styлле as þe ston, oþer a stubbe auþer
 Pat raþeled is in roché grounde with roteȝ a hundreth.
- 2295 Pen muryly efte con he mele, þe mon in þe grene:
 “So, now þou hatȝ þi hert holle, hitte me bihous.
 Halde þe now þe hyȝe hode þat Arþur þe raȝt,
 And kepe þy kanel at þis kest, ȝif hit keuer may.”
 Gawayn ful gryndelly with greme þenne sayde:
- 2300 “Wy! þresch on, þou þro mon, þou þreteȝ to longe;
 I hope þat þi hert arȝe wyth þyn awen seluen.”
 “For soþe,” quop þat oþer freke, “so felly þou spekeȝ,
 I wyl no lenger on lyte lette þin ernde
 riȝt nowe.”
- 2305 Þenne tas he hym stryþe to stryke,
 And frounseȝ boþe lyppe and browe;
 No meruayle þaȝ hym myslyke
 Pat hoped of no rescowe.
- He lyftes lyȝtly his lome, and let hit down fayre
- 2310 With þe barbe of þe bitte bi þe bare nek;
 Þaȝ he homered heterly, hurt hym no more
 Bot snyrt hym on þat on syde, þat seuered þe hyde.
 Þe scharp schrank to þe flesche þurȝ þe schyre grece,
 Pat þe schene blod ouer his schulderes schot to þe erþe;
- 2315 And quen þe burne seȝ þe blode blenk on þe snawe,
 He sprit forth spenne-fote more þen a spere
 lenþe,

Hent heterly his helme, and on his hed cast,
 Schot with his schuldereȝ his fayre schelde vnder,
 Braydeȝ out a bryȝt sworde, and bremely he spekeȝ.
 2320 Neuer syn þat he watȝ burne borne of his moder
 Watȝ he neuer in þis worlde wyȝe half so blyȝe.
 “Blynne, burne, of þy bur, bede me no mo!
 I haf a stroke in þis sted withoute stryȝ hent,
 And if þow recheȝ me any mo, I redyly schal quyte,
 2325 And ȝelde ȝederly aȝayn — and þerto ȝe tryst —
 and foo.
 Bot on stroke here me falleȝ;
 þe couenaunt schop ryȝt so,
 Fermed in Arþureȝ halleȝ,
 2330 And þerfore, hende, now hoo!”

The hapel heldet hym fro, and on his ax rested,
 Sette þe schaft vpon schore, and to þe scharp lened,
 And loked to þe leude þat on þe launde ȝede,
 How þat doȝty, dredles, deruely þer stondeȝ
 2335 Armed, ful aȝleȝ: in hert hit hym lykeȝ.
 Penn he meleȝ muryly wyth a much steuen,
 And wyth a rynkande rurde he to þe renk sayde:
 “Bolde burne, on þis bent be not so gryndel.
 No mon here vnmanerly þe mysboden habbeȝ,
 2340 Ne kyd bot as couenaunde at kyngeȝ kort schaped.
 I hyȝt þe a strok and þou hit hatȝ, halde þe wel payed;
 I relece þe of þe remnaunt of ryȝtes alle oȝer.
 ȝif I deliuer had bene, a boffet paraunter
 I couȝe wroȝeloker haf waret, to þe haf wroȝt anger.
 2345 Fyrst I mansed þe muryly with a mynt one,
 And roue þe wyth no rof-sore, with ryȝt I þe profered

Grabbed hastily his helmet, and on his head cast,
 Shot his shoulders under his fair shield,
 Brings out a bright sword, and bravely he speaks.
 2320 Never since that he was babe born of his mother
 Was there ever in this world warrior half so blithe.
 "Abide, battler; of thy blows give me no more!
 I have one stroke in this place without strife taken,
 And if thou offer me any more, I readily shall requite,
 2325 And repay rapidly in turn —and there-to ye trust—
 As a foe.
 But one stroke here me befalls;
 The covenant shaped right so,
 Confirmed in Arthur's halls,
 2330 And there-for, courtier, now whoa!"

The horseman held himself back, and on his ax rested,
 Set the shaft upon shore, and on the sharp leaned,
 And looked to the liegeman that on the land went
 How that doughty, dreadless, dauntless there stands
 2335 Armed, full fearless: in heart it pleases him.
 Then he speaks merrily with a mighty voice,
 And with a ringing roar he to the rider said:
 "Bold battler, on this field be not so fierce.
 No man here unmannerly thee mistreated has,
 2340 Nor acted but as covenant at king's court requires.
 I promised a stroke and thou it hast; hold thee well paid;
 I release thee of the remnant of all other rights.
 If I more belligerent had been, a buffet perhaps
 I could more harshly have dealt, to thee have wrought harm.
 2345 First I menaced thee merrily with one mighty blow,
 And ripped thee with no gash; which rightly I proffered

For the forewarde that we fest on the fyrst nyȝt;
 And þou trystly þe trawþe and trwly me haldez;
 Al þe gayne þow me gef, as god mon schulde.
 2350 Pat oþer munt for þe morne, mon, I þe profered:
 Pou kyssedes my clere wyf; þe cossez me raztez.
 For boþe two here I þe bede bot two bare myntes
 boute scape.
 Trwe mon trwe restore,
 2355 þenne þar mon drede no waþe.
 At þe þrid þou fayled þore,
 And þerfor þat tappe ta þe.

 “For hit is my wede þat þou wereȝ, þat ilke wouen girdel,
 Myn owen wyf hit þe weued, I wot wel for soþe.
 2360 Now know I wel þy cosses, and þy costes als,
 And þe wowyng of my wyf: I wroȝt hit myseluen.
 I sende hir to asay þe, and sothly me þynkkeȝ
 On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote zede;
 As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more,
 2365 So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi oþer gay knyȝtez.
 Bot here yow lakked a lyttel, sir, and lewté yow wanted;
 Bot þat watȝ for no wylyde werke, ne wowyng nauþer,
 Bot for ȝe lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame.”
 Pat oþer stif mon in study stod a gret whyle,
 2370 So agreued for greme he gryed withinne;
 Alle þe blode of his brest blende in his face,
 Pat al he schrank for schome þat þe schalk talked.
 Þe forme worde vpon folde þat þe freke meled:
 “Corsed worth cowarddyse and couetyse boþe!

For the agreement that we arranged on the first night,
And thou, trusty and true, thy troth to me heldest;
All the gains thou me gave, as good man should.
2350 That second swing on this morning, man, I proffered thee:
Thou kissedest my comely wife; the kisses you returned to me.
For both of the two here I thee offered only two bare swings
To disconcert.
A true man must truly restore;
2355 Then one need fear no hurt.
At the third thou failed, no more;
That tap is thy just desert.

“For it is my weed that thou wearest, that same woven girdle,
Mine own wife weaved it for thee, I know well for sooth.
2360 Now know I well thy kisses, and thy customs also,
And the wooing of my wife: I wrought it myself.
I sent her to assay thee, and soothly thou seemest to me
The most faultless fighter that ever on foot went;
As pearl compared to the white peas is greater in price,
2365 So is Gawain, in good faith, compared to other gay knights.
But here you lacked a little, sir, and loyalty you wanted;
But that was for no wild work, nor wooing neither,
But for ye loved your life; the less I you blame.”
That other strong man in study stood a great while,
2370 So aggrieved for anger he groaned within;
All the blood of his breast blended in his face,
That all he shrank for shame as the chevalier talked.
The first word on the field that the fighter spoke:
“Cursed be cowardice and covetousness both!

- 2375 In yow is vylany and vyse þat vertue distryeþ.”
 Penne he kaȝt to þe knot, and þe kest lawseþ,
 Brayde broþely þe belt to þe burne seluen:
 “Lo! þer þe falssyng, foule mot hit falle!
 For care of þy knokke cowardyse me taȝt
 2380 To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake,
 þat is larges and lewté þat longeþ to knyȝteþ.
 Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer
 Of trecherye and vntrawþe: boþe bityde sorȝe
 and care!
 2385 I biknowe yow, knyȝt, here styлле,
 Al fawty is my fare;
 Leteþ me ouertake your wyлле
 And efte I schal be ware.”
- Thenn loȝe þat oþer leude and luflyly sayde:
 2390 “I halde hit hardily hole, þe harme þat I hade.
 Pou art confessed so clene, beknowen of þy mysses,
 And hatȝ þe penaunce apert of þe poynt of myn egge,
 I halde þe polysed of þat plyȝt, and pured as clene
 As þou hadeþ neuer forfeȝed syþen þou watȝ fyrst borne;
 2395 And I gif þe, sir, þe gurdel þat is golde-hemmed,
 For hit is grene as my gounе. Sir Gawayn, ȝe maye
 Penk vpon þis ilke þrepe, þer þou forth þryngeȝ
 Among prynces of prys, and þis a pure token
 Of þe chaunce of þe Grene Chapel at cheualrous knyȝteþ.
 2400 And ȝe schal in þis Nwe Ȝer aȝayn to my woneȝ,
 And we schyn reuel þe remnaunt of þis ryche fest
 ful bene.”
 Þer lapед hym fast þe lorde
 And sayde: “With my wyf, I wene,

2375 In you is villainy and vice that virtue destroys."
 Then he caught on to the knot, and the clasp loosens,
 Flings, boiling, the belt to the battler himself:
 "Lo! there the falsehood, foul may it befall!
 For care of thy knock cowardice me taught
 2380 To accord me with coveting my character to forsake,
 That is largesse and loyalty that belongs to knights.
 Now am I faulty and false, and feared have been ever
 Of treachery and untruth: both betide sorrow
 And care!
 2385 I confess, knight; hear me still,
 I am at fault in this affair;
 Let me regain your good will
 And next time I shall be ware."

 Then laughed that other liege and lovingly said:
 2390 "I hold it happily healed, the harm that I had.
 Thou hast confessed so cleanly, told thy misdeeds,
 And hast the public penance of the point of my blade,
 I hold thee polished by that penance, and purified as clean
 As if thou had never sinned since thou was first born;
 2395 And I give thee, sir, the girdle that is gold-hemmed,
 For it is green as my gown. Sir Gawain, ye may
 Think upon this thing, when thou art in the throng
 Around princes of price, and this a pure token
 Of the adventure of the Green Chapel for chivalrous knights.
 2400 And ye shall in this New Year go again to my dwelling,
 And we shall revel for the remnant of this rich feast
 The ladies between."
 Then invited him earnestly the lord
 And said: "With my wife, I ween,

2405 We shall you well accord,
That was your enemy keen."

“Nay, for sooth,” quoth the stalwart, and seized his helmet,
 And has it off graciously, and the Green Knight thanks:
 “I have sojourned sadly; may good fortune be yours,
 2410 And may He reward you Who honors all good manners!
 And commend me to that courteous, your comely companion,
 Both the one and that other, mine honored ladies,
 Who their knight with their tricks have cleverly beguiled.
 But it is no marvel though a fool go mad,
 2415 And through wiles of women be won over to sorrow,
 For so was Adam on earth by one beguiled,
 And Solomon by many such, and Samson in his turn:
 Delilah dealt him his fate. David there-after
 Was befuddled by Bathsheba and much bale suffered.
 2420 Now these were wronged by their wiles. It would be a
 gain
 To love them well, and believe them not, if a lad could do so.
 For these were formerly the finest, whom fortune favored
 Excellently over all these others, under the heavens
 Confused;
 2425 And all these made wild,
 By women that they used.
 Though I be now beguiled,
 I think I might be excused.

2430 “But your girdle,” quoth Gawain, “God give you reward!
That will I wield with good will, not for winning gold,
Nor the sash, nor the silk, nor the side pendants,
For wealth nor for worship, nor for the worthy works,

Bot in syngne of my surfet I schal se hit ofte,
 When I ride in renoun, remorde to myseluen
 2435 þe faut and þe fayntyse of þe flesche crabbed,
 How tender hit is to entyse teches of fylþe;
 And þus, quen pryde schal me pryk for prowes of armes,
 þe loke to þis luf-lace schal leþe my hert.
 Bot on I wolde yow pray, displeses yow neuer:
 2440 Syn ȝe be lorde of þe ȝonder londe þer I haf lent inne
 Wyth yow wyth worschyp; þe Wyȝe hit yow ȝelde
 þat vphaldeȝ þe heuen and on hyȝ sitteȝ.
 How norne ȝe yowre ryȝt nome, and þenne no more?"
 "þat schal I telle þe trwly," quop þat oþer þenne,
 2445 "Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe.
 Þurȝ myȝt of Morgne la Faye, þat in my hous lenges,
 And koyntyse of clergie, bi craftes wel lerned,
 þe maystrés of Merlyn mony hatȝ taken
 For ho hatȝ dalt drwry ful dere sumtyme
 2450 With þat conable klerk, þat knowes alle your knyȝteȝ
 at hame;
 Morgne þe goddes
 Þerfore hit is hir name:
 Weldeȝ non so hyȝe hawtesse
 2455 þat ho ne con make ful tame.

"Ho wayned me vpon þis wyse to your wynne halle
 For to assay þe surquidré, ȝif hit soth were
 þat rennes of þe grete renoun of þe Rounde Table;
 Ho wayned me þis wonder your wytteȝ to reue,
 2460 For to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dyȝe
 With glopnyng of þat ilke gome þat gostlych speked
 With his hede in his honde bifore þe hyȝe table.

But in sign of my sin I shall see it often,
 When I ride in renown, remorse to myself,
 2435 The fault and the feebleness of the crabbed flesh,
 How easy it is to entice touches of filth;
 And thus, when pride presses me on for prowess of arms,
 The look to this love-lace shall allay my heart.
 But one thing I would you pray, may it displease you never:
 2440 Since ye be lord of the yonder land where I have lingered
 With you with worship; may the Warrior reward you
 That upholds the heaven and on high sits.
 How say ye your true name? And then I ask no more."
 "That shall I tell thee truly," quoth that other then,
 2445 "Bercilak de Hautdesert I am called in this land.
 Through might of Morgan la Fay, who in my house lives,
 And quaint lore of clergy, by crafts well learned,
 Many of the magic arts of Merlin has she taken
 For she was mistress full dear at one time
 2450 To that cunning clerk that knows all your knights
 By fame;
 Morgan the goddess
 Therefore is her name:
 Wields none such high haughtiness
 2455 Whom she cannot make full tame.

 "She sent me in this manner to your splendid hall
 For to assay the swollen pride, if it sooth were
 That runs of the great renown of the Round Table;
 She brought thee this wonder your wits to bereave
 2460 And to have grieved Guenevere and got her to die
 By the gruesome sight of that gallant that ghastly spoke
 With his head in his hand before the high table.

Pat is ho þat is at home, þe auncian lady;
 Ho is euen þyn aunt, Arpureȝ half-suster,
 2465 þe duches doȝter of Tyntagelle, þat dere Vter after
 Hade Arþur vpon, þat aþel is nowþe.
 Perfore I eþe þe, haþel, to com to þyn aunt,
 Make myry in my hous; my meny þe louies,
 And I wol þe as wel, wyȝe, bi my faythe,
 2470 As any gome vnder God for þy grete trauþe."
 And he nikked hym naȝe; he nolde bi no wayes.
 Pay acolen and kysen and kennen ayþer oþer
 To þe prynce of paradise, and parten ryȝt þere
 on coolde;
 2475 Gawayn on blonk ful bene
 To þe kyngeȝ burȝ buskeȝ bolde,
 And þe knyȝt in þe enker-grene
 Whiderwarde-so-euer he wolde.

 Wylde wayeȝ in þe worlde Wowen now rydeȝ
 2480 On Gryngolet, þat þe grace hade geten of his lyue;
 Ofte he herbered in house and ofte al þeroute,
 And mony aventure in vale, and venquyst ofte,
 Pat I ne tyȝt at þis tyme in tale to remene.
 þe hurt watȝ hole þat he hade hent in his nek,
 2485 And þe blykkande belt he bere þerabout
 Abelef as a bauderyk bounden bi his syde,
 Loken vnder his lyfte arme, þe lace, with a knot,
 In tokenyng he watȝ tane in tech of a faute.
 And þus he commes to þe court, knyȝt al in sounde.
 2490 þer wakned wele in þat wone when wȝst þe grete
 Pat gode Gawayn watȝ commen, gayn hit hym þoȝt.

That is she that is at home, the ancient lady;
 She is even thine aunt, Arthur's half-sister,
 2465 The duchess' daughter of Tintagel, whom dear Uther after
 Had Arthur upon, that glorious is now.
 Therefore I urge thee, horseman, to come to thine aunt,
 Make merry in my house; my court thee loves,
 And I will love thee as well, warrior, by my faith,
 2470 As any gallant under God for thy great truth."
 And Gawain denied him with "nay"; he would in no way.
 They embrace and kiss and each the other
 To the Prince of Paradise, and they part right there
 In the cold;
 2475 Gawain on bronco keen
 To the king's court rushes bold,
 And the knight in the deep green
 Went where-so-ever he would.

 Wild ways in the world Wawain now rides
 2480 On Gringolet, when the grace was given of his life;
 Oft he was harbored in house and often all outside,
 And had many adventures on the way, and vanquished oft,
 Which I do not care at this time in tale to rehearse.
 The hurt was whole where he had been hit in his neck,
 2485 And the bright shining belt he bore there-about
 Obliquely as a baldric bound by his side,
 Locked under his left arm the lace sash, with a knot,
 As a token he was taken by the touch of a sin.
 And thus he comes to the court, a knight all safe and sound.
 2490 Joy wakened in that dwelling when the great king was aware
 That good Gawain was come he thought it grand news.

þe kyng kyssez þe knyzt, and þe whene alce,
 And syþen mony syker knyzt þat sozt hym to haylce,
 Of his fare þat hym frayned; and ferlyly he telles,
 2495 Biknowez alle þe costes of care þat he hade,
 þe chaunce of þe chapel, þe chere of þe knyzt,
 þe luf of þe ladi, þe lace at þe last.
 þe nirt in þe nek he naked hem schewed
 þat he lazt for his vnleuté at þe leudes hondes
 2500 for blame.
 He tened quen he schulde telle,
 He groned for gref and grame;
 þe blod in his face con melle,
 When he hit schulde schewe, for schame.

 2505 “Lo! lorde,” quop þe leude, and þe lace hondeled,
 “þis is þe bende of þis blame I bere in my nek,
 þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I lazt haue
 Of couardise and couetyse þat I haf cazt þare;
 þis is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne,
 2510 And I mot nedeȝ hit were wyle I may last,
 For mon may hyden his harme, bot vnhap ne may hit,
 For þer hit oneȝ is tachched twynne wil hit neuer.”
 þe kyng comfortez þe knyzt, and alle þe court als
 Laȝen loude þerat, and luflyly acorden
 2515 þat lordes and ladis þat longed to þe Table,
 Vche burne of þe broþerhede, a bauderyk schulde haue,
 A bende abelef hym aboute of a bryzt grene,
 And þat, for sake of þat segge, in swete to were,
 For þat watȝ acorded þe renoun of þe Rounde Table,

The king kisses the knight, and the queen also,
 And then many sure knights that sought to embrace him,
 That asked him how he fared; and wonders he tells,
 2495 He made known all the causes of care that he had,
 The achievement of the chapel, the cheer of the knight,
 The love of the lady, the lace at the last.
 The nick in the neck he naked them showed
 That he took from the liege lord's hands for his disloyalty,
 2500 To blame.
 He grieved when he had to tell;
 He groaned for grief and ill fame;
 In his face the blood did up well,
 When he showed the nick, for shame.

 2505 "Lo! lord," quoth the liegeman, and the lace handled,
 "This is the emblem of the blame I bear in my neck,
 This is the injury and the loss that I laid hold on
 For cowardice and covetousness that I have caught there;
 This is the token of untruth in which I was taken,
 2510 And I must by necessity wear it all the while I may live,
 For one may hide his harm, but sin can not be hidden,
 For where it once is attached depart will it never."
 The king comforts the knight, and all the court also
 Laugh loudly there-at, and lovingly agree
 2515 That lords and ladies that belonged to the Table,
 Each member of the brotherhood, a baldric should have,
 band obliquely him about of a bright green,
 And for the sake of that stalwart, to wear that sign,
 For it represents the renown of the Round Table,

2520 And he honoured þat hit hade euermore after,
As hit is breued in þe best boke of romaunce.
Þus in Arthurus day þis aunter bitidde,
Þe Brutus bokez þerof beres wyttensesse;
Syþen Brutus, þe bolde burne, bozed hider fyrst,
2525 After þe segge and þe asaute watz sesed at Troye,
iwysse.
Mony aunterez here-biforne
Haf fallen suche er þis.
Now þat bere þe croun of þorne,
2530 He bryng vus to his blysse!

AMEN.

HONY SOYT QUI MAL PENCE.

2520 And he was honored that it had evermore after,
As it is written in the best book of romance.
Thus in Arthur's day this adventure befell,
The Brutus books there-of bear witness;
Since Brutus, the bold brave, first bounded hither
2525 Once the siege and the assault was ceased at Troy,
As it is.
Many adventures here-before
Have fallen such as this.
May He Who bore the crown of thorns
2530 Bring us to his bliss!"

AMEN.

SHAME TO HIM WHO THINKS EVIL.

Larry D. Benson is Higginson Professor of English Emeritus at Harvard University, where he taught for forty years, beginning in 1959, when he received his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley and his appointment as an instructor at Harvard. He has written on a variety of subjects, including books on Middle English—*Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *King Arthur's Death*, and *Malory's Morte Darthur*—and articles on Old and Middle English, most notably his 1966 article "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry." He is General Editor of *The Riverside Chaucer*.

Daniel Donoghue is the John P. Marquand Professor of English at Harvard University and the author of numerous publications on Old and Middle English, including *Lady Godiva: A Literary History of the Legend* and *Old English Literature: A Short Introduction*. He is editor of the Old English series for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library of Harvard University Press.

"The great virtue of this translation is its brilliant faithfulness to the original, and the way it preserves much of the flavor and stylistic vigor of the original."

Robert J. Hasenfratz,

Professor of English and Medieval Studies, University of Connecticut

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a late fourteenth-century Middle English alliterative romance outlining an adventure of Sir Gawain, a knight of King Arthur's Round Table. In this poem, Sir Gawain accepts a challenge from a mysterious green warrior, and in a struggle to uphold his oath along this quest, he demonstrates chivalry, loyalty, and honor.

This new verse translation of the most popular English romance of the fourteenth century to survive to the present offers students an accessible way of approaching the literature of medieval England without losing the flavor of the original writing. With a foreword by David Donoghue, the close verse translation includes facing pages of the original fourteenth-century text and its modern translation.

LARRY BENSON is Emeritus Professor of English at Harvard University. The editor of the Riverside edition of Chaucer's works, he is also the author of *Contradiction: From Beowulf to Chaucer; King Arthur's Death; The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure; Malory's Morte Darthur; and The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature*.

DANIEL DONOGHUE is the John P. Marquand Professor of English, Harvard University. He is editor of the Old English series for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library of Harvard University Press.



West Virginia University Press
Medieval Literature Series
WVUPress.com

ISBN: 978-1-935978-63-3



9 781935 978633